

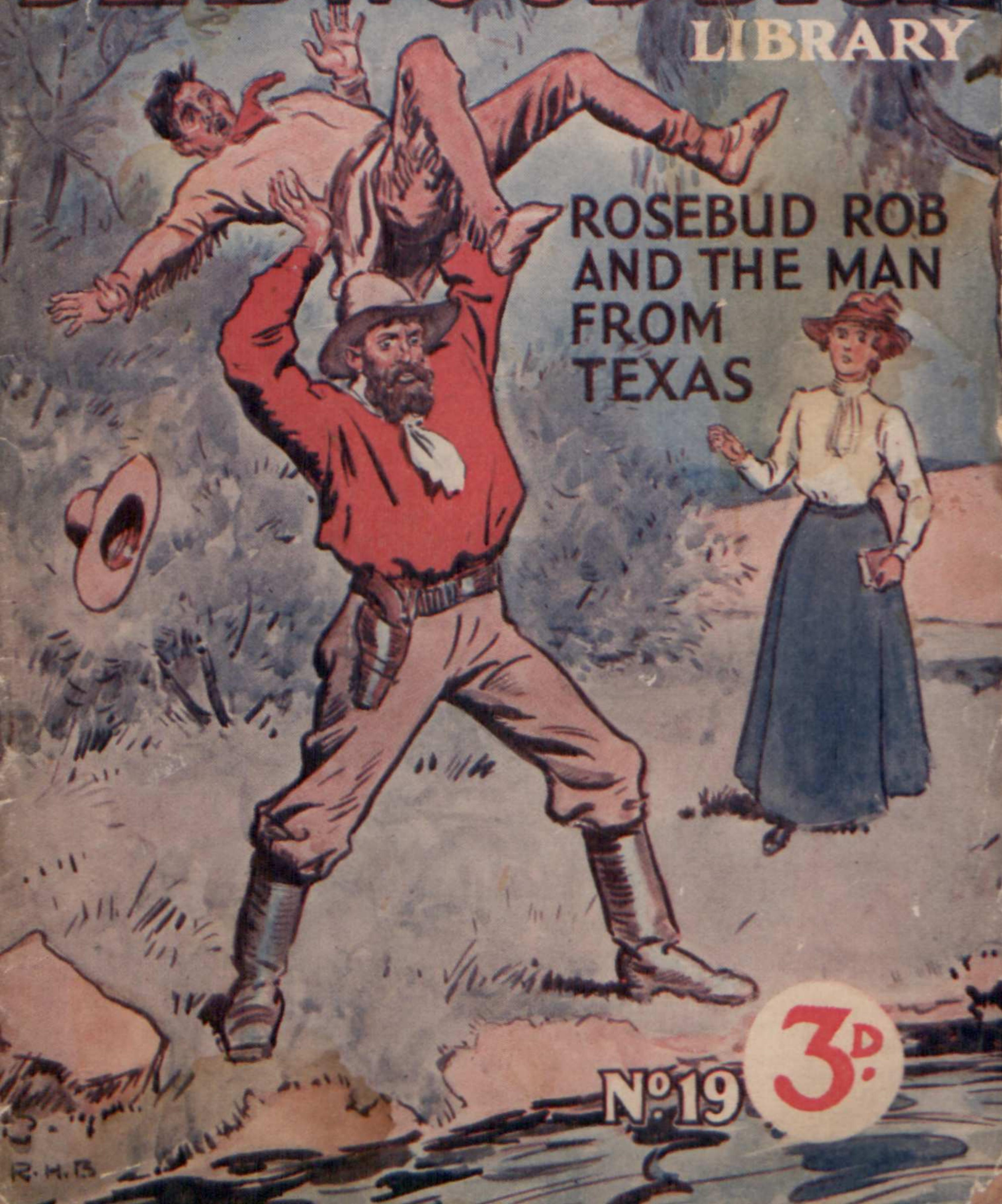
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ROSEBUD ROB AND THE MAN FROM TEXAS

CHAPTER I

PHOTOGRAPH PHIL

"YES, pilgrims, Photograph Philip am I—a wonder of the nineteenth century—a marvel fer two or severial continents. Walk up, ye benign-faced descendants of the ape—ramble hitherward, ye anglers fer ther golden grub, and behold the various peculiarities o' yer humble servant—then smile, on realizing that you have blundered plum squar' upon the Mecca of your sanguine anticipations—that you have found a *Multum in Parvo*, right hayr in the city of Cascade.

"Feller-citizens, I am not a public lecturer, aiming at a position in the Capitol, neither am I a quack cure-all for all diseases and afflictions, as ye might all suppose. No sir, my intelligent hearers, I am none of these, but something grander—a spontaneous outburst of effusive nature, sandwiched with seven pounds of brains, and more tongue than mortal man e'er had before.

"Oh! bewhiskered monarchs of the pick, let me impress it deeply upon your minds, that I am the coming man, the conqueror of science, the professor o' the American sleuths. Behold in me, oh mighty hosts, the son of a seventh son! A man whose understanding surpasseth thine own, even though mine years number but in the nineteenth column of life. Look at me—slap your optics straight upon me, ye suspicious mortals, and apprise me ef ye see in me anything unnatural—if I am particularly a monstrosity, a mermaid or a catfish?

"As I said before, gaze at me! You behold an ordinary chap, five feet four high, weighing a hundred and forty pounds—a saucy-looking, independent chap—and the biggest rascal east o' the settin' sun. I stand upon a dry-goods box, in the main streets of Cascade City, surrounded by a multitude of people—a hard crowd o'

60

'citizens,' at the best. Behind me, upon the dry-goods box, stand several frames, and an object covered with a blanket, which might be a sewing-machine, a camera, or a surveyor's instrument. It is the middle of the three—a photograph-machine, for taking the picture of man or beast, with equal accuracy and dispatch.

"Here, let me arrange the frames, and unveil them. There! you see you have pictures of four hundred individuals, distinct from each other. I call this my rogue's gallery, and these are my rogues. Every man you see there pictured is a consummate rascal with a reward set upon his head. Walk up and gaze at the artistic collection! It costs you nothing to look upon the features of brother-beats and scamps. Walk up, pilgrims, and view the collection. Maybe you'll see the face of some dear relative, and I can sell you a duplicate for the moderate sum of a dollar!"

The crowd surged forward to get a peep at the collection.

The eccentric individual had quite described the scene; let us devote a little space in describing him.

He was a well-formed youth, about nineteen years of age, attired in a stylish suit of grey, with pantaloons tucked in his boot-tops, and a battered "plug" hat cocked upon one side of his head.

It was a strange face. There was an expression of good-nature in the prominent lineaments, as well as signs suggestive of a cunning and an independent, dare-devil disposition, and a will firmer than rock. His features were of ordinary mould, with firm chin, fat, health-tinted cheeks, and a mouth ever haunted with a waggish expression or a smile. The eyes were blue, keen and sparkling, the forehead high, the hair brown and curling close to the skull. This gave him a strange appearance, as viewed among the straight and long-haired miners of the town.

Whence he had come none knew, except that the stage had brought him into the

town, with a superfluity of trunks and boxes ; and now, under the moonlight of the early autumnal evening, with its soft Indian-summer breezes, he had gathered about him such a crowd as ne'er before had assembled in the main street of the town—or city.

For the town of Cascade City has made rapid strides since we bade it adieu in "The Hermit of Cascade City," to return and chronicle another strange and eventful story of the mines. The monthly moon-tides now came regularly, and covered the gulch-bottom with golden sands, even as the moon fulled in the heavens. Consequently, in a few short days, the gulch was a second Deadwood, with its hosts of people, and hundreds of saloons, shanties, stores and tented habitations, wherein dwelt and traded the heterogeneous masses.

Changes, too, have come among those whom we have formerly known as characters.

Sir Tom Somerset and his wife Idyl have gone East, and of all the faces we see in the crowd which surrounds the sharper, Photograph Phil, there are but two we recognize.

One of these is Baltimore Bess !

We cast around for the next face which we know. Carefully we gaze over the human sea, but see none familiar in our memory, unless—can it be possible ?

Can it be that we are not mistaken in that fellow, not far from Bess—the blear-eyed, red-nosed, raggedly-attired bummer, whose legs seem unable to support him, and whose drunken hiccoughs and exclamations are the cause of many a shout of laughter ?

A new "citizen" in the town, is he, evidently, for nobody seems to know him. At the best he is a filthy-looking, greasy old wretch, with unkempt hair and beard :—no, we are sure, now, that we have never seen him before. It was a faint gleam in his preternaturally bright eyes, which called back the recollection of another.

"Hic ! hur-r-rah-er !" this individual would shout, occasionally. "I say (hic !) young feller, d'ye know me ? D'ye (hic !) ever remember o' takin' my fortygraff ?"

"Most noble duke, I am sorry to aver that I never had that honour !" Photograph Phil replied, with a grin.

"No ! I guess-er not, young feller. I (hic !) guess-er not. D'ye know me (hic !)—ye know who I am ?"

"Ain't the Grand Duke Alexis, are you ?"

"No ! guess-er not !" the old bummer muttered, scratching his head through the crownless part of his old hat, as if to dig up the roots of remembrance—"guess-er not."

"Ner Dom Pedro, the emperor ?"

"Ye-e-s—Dom Pedro—dom it (hic !) as much as ye please, young feller. I (hic !) play pedro, an' get (hic !) er beat. D-d-dead broke."

"Oh ! maybe you're George Jackson, then ?" the Boy Photographer observed.

"N-n-no ! Guess-er not. Don't know me (hic !), hey ? Well (hic !) my handle's Bully Ike, now, you b-b-bet (hic !). B-bully Ike, frum the six hundredth (hic !) congressional deestrict. I'm a b-b-bruiser, I am (hic !), an' don't ye fergit it—a reg'lar (hic !) masher frum ther old (hic !) sc'ool. T-t-t-take my (hic !) fortygraff er, young feller ?"

"Wait till you're sober, old pilgrim, and spruced up. Then, come around, and I'll set you off in style. Now, feller-citizens, I guess you've seen ther subjects o' my rogues' gallery, an' we'll adjourn till tomorrow. Then, all I request is a visit from those who desire to have their pictures taken. Thanking you for your kind attention, I will now dismiss you."

As the show was evidently over for the time being, the crowd began to disperse, and soon the stand lately occupied by the lively-tongued photographer was cleared of its freight, which had been transported to a boxed wagon, drawn up at one side of the trail as if for repairs, while a superannuated mule grazed close at hand.

The boy artist had, in the meantime, wandered through the town, with no intent, evidently, except to see the sights ; for there were many strange ones to be seen in the little mining strike of Cascade City. Saloons, dance-houses, and gaming-hells flourished at every hand, and in some instances, the three occupations were confined to one building.

Cascade City also now boasted of a real theatre, which was a large frame shanty, and was designated as "The Home of Mirth."

Into this establishment Photograph Phil paid his way, in preference to whiling away his leisure in the saloons.

Passing inside, the young photographer managed to obtain a seat, although the place was packed. After he had thoroughly enjoyed a part of the programme, he left the place, with the intention of returning after getting a breath of fresh air.

But an event unforeseen prevented his return.

Just outside, he was touched upon the arm by a young female, poorly dressed, with a bit of shawl over her head in place of a hat.

"Please, sir, would you be so kind as to give me a few pennies ? Mother is very sick—brother was killed last week, and we have nothing to eat, nor no money."

It was a plaintive, childish voice, even though the speaker was full-sized—very pretty, both of face and form, Photograph Phil thought from what he could see of her in the gloom, which reflected from the theatre.

"What is your name and where do you live?" he asked, eyeing her keenly.

"My name, sir, is Millicent Vere," the girl replied, after a trifle of hesitation. "We live in a cabin down the gulch."

"Thank you. If you will permit me to accompany you to your home, I will willingly give you aid!" Phil said, politely. "If I find that you are worthy of assistance, I shall gladly render you any assistance in my power."

"You are very kind, sir, but I would much rather you would not come—at least not yet. Good evening—excuse me, for the intrusion——"

"But, say, hold up!" Phil remonstrated, rather authoritatively. "Jest don't git in a hurry." And fumbling in his vest pocket, he drew forth a roll of bills, and thrust them into the pretty beggar's hands. "There you are, miss—guess there's enough to keep you from starvation awhile. 'Sh! no words about it, now. Take the money freely, and go on your way rejoicing."

"But—but, sir, you are robbing yourself—you——"

"Git out!" said Phil, with a chuckle. "Why, that's nothing—I am rich."

"Anyhow, I thank you very much," Millicent Vere said, gratefully. "I shall try to repay you. Before I go will you tell me to whom I am indebted?"

"They call me Photograph Phil, miss. As for being indebted, get out!"

Millicent bowed, with a murmur of thanks, and turning hurried away, swiftly, down the gulch.

She presently emerged into the moonlight, and the boy stood gazing after her, noting with appreciative eye her gracefulness, and trim, willowy form.

"I told her I was rich!" he muttered, "and so I am in a superfluity of tongue, brains, and cheek, I believe. But certainly not in gold, when the money I gave her constituted my whole fortune, with the exception of a few silver pieces. Well, the next thing is to look out for a place to lodge, to-night."

He was about to turn up the street into the main part of the town, when his sharp eye caught sight of something lying upon the ground, just where Millicent Vere had stood while addressing him.

He stepped forward, and upon examination found it to be a piece of paper. Many would have passed it by; but not so with the Boy Sleuth.

He had long since learned to regard trifles as the foretaste of greater things.

He now picked up the paper, and bringing it where the moonlight could play upon it, discovered that it contained the impression in black ink of a skull and cross-bones, and also a black belt or band. Inside this band were the three letters, "*T. of B.*"

"Well, I'll be shot if there isn't something queer here!" Phil muttered. "Let me see: what does *T. of B.* stand for?—Tim of Ballwhack—Temple of Bacchus—Hello! Now that I come to think, there is a place up the gulch here which bears that same name. I wonder if this applies to it in any way?"

As he gave vent to these mutterings, he wandered along up the street, and soon paused in front of a small shanty better finished than its neighbours, and over the door was painted in dull letters:

"TEMPLE OF BACCHUS."

It was not an inviting-looking place, for the windows were of red-stained glass and the doors closed.

Watching an opportunity, when some one had partly opened the door for the purpose of peering out, Phil advanced swiftly, pushed the door farther open, and stepped inside.

CHAPTER II

THE STRANGE INITIATION

"THER coolest cuss in ther mines!"

The exclamation came from a brawny, fat-legged individual, of rough appearance, who stood leaning against the bar of the "Distillery," one of the most popular resorts in Cascade City. He was surrounded by a knot of men of similar appearance, whose blue or red shirts and long bristling beards proclaimed them to be miners.

"Yes, sir-ee! thet same galoot aire ther coolest cuss in the mines!" the first speaker averred. "If I war a good Samaritan, w'ich I ain't, I'd like ter see thet Sport git rich an' married off."

"Pshaw! guess ye don't know his calibre, do ye?" grunted Mattice, the bar-keeper, as he mopped off the counter with a filthy rag. "That Rosebud Rob hed ther ch'ice o' one o' ther purtiest gals ye evyer set eyes on, when ther 'citemen't fu'st broke out hayr, an' he wouldn't take it, hang me if he would!"

"Ye don't mean ter say et, thet ther Sport yonder, wi' a rosebud in his button-hole, refused ter j'ine in double harness wi' a pretty petticoater?"

ROSEBUD ROB AND THE MAN FROM TEXAS

"He jest did that same."

"Cuss him! He ought ter be shot!" and the miner emphasized his views by pounding the counter smartly with his fist, which was a huge mass of bone and flesh. "Whar's ther pilgrim as wants ter marry me off ter a good-lookin' feminine—oh, whar is he, ther brute?"

The centre object of the foregoing conversation now came forward from the inner room, where he had been watching the dancers, of whom there were some two-score upon the floor, of both sexes.

Rosebud Rob, the Spotter Sport!

He needs no reintroduction to the reader, to whom he has made former appearances.

The same cool, handsome Sport he was yet, with his elegant make-up, rivalling that of a Broadway swell. Everything he wore was the best of its line, and you had the Spotter Sport's photograph.

"Ah! good-evening, gents!" he saluted, as he sauntered up, with a bow.

He then sauntered on into the gambling-saloon, where all kinds of games were running in full blast.

Seating himself at the table just vacated by a couple of miners, he lit a cigar, and watched those around him sharply.

Baltimore Bess came in, after a while, and occupied a chair opposite the Sport. She was looking very pretty in her semi-feminine hunting-costume, with the hat set jauntily upon her flowing hair, and top boots reaching to her knees.

"Well," she said, interrogatively, "what is the news?"

"None to speak of," Bob replied, with a yawn. "Things are getting monotonous here."

"So they are. Did you see the photographer who arrived this evening?"

"Only from a distance."

"He is a brick. Can talk more in less time than a dozen phonographs."

"Getting that pretty steep, are you not, Bess, gal?"

"No, not a bit. But, something else fetched me here, Mr. Mapleton. What do you think about the Temple of Bacchus down here in the gulch?"

"The temple of what?"

"The Temple of Bacchus."

"I am sure I don't know. What is there peculiar about the place?"

"Well, just cast your eye at it when you pass next time. It is kept under lock and key, and no one is ever seen to enter or leave it."

"Umph! that is strange. I'll remember your suggestion, Bess," as the girl dare-devil arose to go.

Let us return to Photograph Phil, whom

we left after he had pushed the door open and stepped inside the Temple of Bacchus.

He found himself in a little vestibule, dimly lighted by a sputtering candle, and confronted by a masked man, who held in his hand a cocked revolver.

The door was instantly slammed shut; and Phil was alone with his savage-looking confronter.

"Hist! no noise!" the masked man ordered, peremptorily. "What brings you here, young man?"

"What is that your business?" Phil demanded. "Don't I belong to this hyer lodge?"

"Let's see your slip, then!" was the gruff command, for the man evidently disbelieved this parry.

Not a little doubtful as to the result, Phil produced the paper he had found in front of the theatre, and handed it over. After scrutinizing it a moment the guard returned it, with a grim "humph."

"Pass on!" he said; "I guess it's all right. You'd better never try the front door again, however."

Phil nodded, and passed on down a dusky hall, along the walls of which were racks containing all sorts of masks, and hooded black cloaks.

"If I ain't in a scrape this time, you can sell me out for a cent!" he muttered, dubiously, as he paused before a rack containing a large black gown and mask. "I've got to make a *debut* of some kind, and I calculate I might as well collar one of the turnouts. Was ever man in such a fix before?"

Not without considerable uneasiness he managed to envelop himself in the huge gown, and affixed the mask to his face, after drawing the hood over his head.

The next act was to enter the door to the main apartment of the building.

As he entered the apartment, he glanced nervously around him.

There was much to surprise him.

The room was large, and was plastered, papered, and carpeted.

Long benches were scattered here and there about common deal tables.

Upon these benches, figures arrayed the same as Phil himself, were engaged in playing cards, under the dim light of chandeliers which pended from the ceiling.

Farther in the middle of the room was a large dais, well carpeted and ornamented by a revolving stool, upon which sat another grim masked figure.

A strange, sibilant hiss seemed to emanate from this party as Photograph Phil entered, and mechanically each and every figure arose, and a double score of accusing fingers were pointed at the intruder.

"Consarn their pictures!" Phil muttered. "Wonder what a fellow's to do, anyhow. Guess I'll waltz for'a'd, and kneel before the old shellbark on the turn-table stool, and see what he's got to say for himself."

Vaguely wondering what the result would be, Phil summoned up his courage, and marched boldly forward and dropped upon one knee before the dais, then arose and stood with folded arms before the unknown master of these strange beings and surroundings.

"Ha! thou art punctual, Cross-Bones!" came the words, in a deep, hoarse tone of voice. "What news for thy brethren bringest thou?"

"None, chief!" Photograph Phil replied, in a disguised voice. "The information for which I sought was not to be had."

"Why address me as 'chief,' Sir Pirate? Dost thou not recognize the difference between me and thy high-commander, Diablo?"

"Ay, I readily perceived the difference, your honour, but chose to call you chief because thou art acting in the place of the great Diablo!"

At this juncture, Photograph Phil became suddenly aware that he had made a great blunder, for there was an instant hiss from the masked gamblers, and a series of revolver clicks! and the young adventurer had but to glance around to find that a score of six-shooters were levelled at his head.

While the figure upon the whirling stool suddenly stood upon his feet, stern and grim, in his uncouth robe and mask.

"Impostor!" he hissed, fiercely, "we trapped for you and caught you. *I am Diablo*, and you are not the spy, Cross-Bones, whom we sent out from our midst."

"Well, supposin' I ain't? What are you going to do about it, anyhow?" Phil demanded, tearing off his mask.

"My autographical signature is Photograph Phil, every time, and if you want anything of me, jest speak out!"

A stronger hiss came from the mysterious crowd, followed by a groan.

"Thou art a stranger, whose wit hath led thee to penetrate into the Infernal Forty tribunal," the figure upon the throne spoke. "Therefore, unless thou takest oath as a brother, thou art a dead man. We are just forty favoured sons of the devil, all working to one end—forty, just—no more. If a man is admitted, he is put through the initiation, and we mark him. He then draws lots with such a man of the band as a jury shall name, and if he wins he lives, a pledged member of the Black Band, who are doomed forever to labour for the God of Gold, under the earth, while the other

member dies, and *vice versa!*"

Phil nodded grimly.

"Go on," he said, coolly.

"Thou, the intruder, hast the choice of two chances. Either thou art to subject thyself to instant death, or submit to the terrible initiations of our Infernal Brotherhood. Which will you have? Will you be a servant unto the God of the Christian or a slave of me, the great Diablo?"

Photograph Phil gave vent to a speculative whistle, and was somewhat alarmed at his position.

He took some time to turn the matter over in his mind before he made any reply to the chief's questions.

"Come! time is up; make your choice without any more hesitation!" Diablo cried. "You will accept—which?"

"I will join your band!" Photograph Phil replied, deliberately.

"Thou hast chosen wisely!" Diablo said, with a horrible chuckle. "The devil rejoiceth when he catches a fish like you."

"Brethren of the Infernal Forty," he said to the band, "thou beholdest here a new candidate for position in thy ranks. You all know the rules of our devilish and unprincipled order—where a new applicant is sent in, either the applicant or one from your midst, must die. An election is held to see who shall be the man to draw straws with the new candidate. Such an election will now be held. First, however, let the new candidate be disarmed, and his feet bound, until he is ready for initiation.

Several of the outlaws advanced upon Photograph Phil, who threw up his arms and allowed them to go through his clothing, but they failed to find weapons of any sort. He was seated upon one of the benches, and his feet securely bound, so that he could not walk. When this was accomplished, the chief, Diablo, descended from his throne, if such the dais might be called, carrying in his hand a box.

"Let every man get ready to cast his vote!" he ordered. "Every man shall write upon a piece of paper the name of the man that is, in his opinion, the best prepared to die, and drop the vote into the box. The name receiving the most votes shall be the man to draw straws with the new candidate."

A strange, unnatural silence prevailed in the room. Each man received a blank slip of paper from Diablo, and betook himself to a different part of the room, wherein to write out some fellow-mortal's death-warrant.

Photograph Phil sat looking on, wondering what the issue would be.

The chief, Diablo, seated himself at one of the tables, with the box before him, and

when the masked brethren had written their votes, they passed by the table in single file and dropped them into the box, retiring thereafter to a respectful distance, where they awaited while Diablo counted the votes.

He went over them carefully, sorting out each man's vote by itself.

After the last vote had been stacked, and Diablo arose, with a suppressed chuckle in his voice, there was a moment of deathly silence.

Diablo finally spoke :

"The votes have been counted, and it falls to Diuena, the Spaniard, to pull the death-straws. Seize him, knights, and bind him, that he may do no one injury; then prepare to give the new candidate his initiation. What is your name, young man?"

"Photograph Phil, at your service!"

"Very well, sir. Steel your heart to pain, and prepare yourself for the excruciating agonies of our infernal torture!"

"Go ahead!" Phil replied. He was resolved that if others could live through the torture, he could.

Preparations were made according to Diablo's orders.

The man Diuena was seized, bound and disarmed, and thrown upon the floor.

Two of the brethren approached Photograph Phil, and tightly bandaged his eyes so that it was impossible for him to see. Cotton was then stuffed into his ears and he was seized bodily, and carried about the room by the head and heels, while the whole gang followed in his wake, howling in a frightful manner, making a din that he could hear, although, to him, it was but a faint, indescribable pandemonium of sound.

After a while he was laid upon the floor, but was speedily seized again and raised, but this time upon a blanket, from which he was unceremoniously bounced into the air and caught again.

The bouncing process was finally finished, and he was stood upon his feet, and stripped of his upper garments, to the waist.

Then there was a strange silence!

What was going to happen?

Ha! the chief now speaks, his hoarse, cruel voice bearing a spice of devilish exultation in its tone.

"Bring forth the red-hot 'forty,' and mark our man for life!"

There was a hiss from the men, then the bandage was torn from the eyes of the Boy Sleuth.

He started with a cry of alarm and horror, at the awful sight that was presented to his gaze!

CHAPTER III

A MAIDEN IN DISTRESS

OUT under the moonlight of that same eventful night, the gulch was crowded with miners and adventurers—a heterogeneous mass of people who were hurrying to and fro, or gathered in knots, conversing upon the main topics of the day.

In one place, two brutal toughs were engaged in a rough-and-tumble combat with knives, ringed in by a crowd of admiring friends.

In another place, the wily Eastern three-card monte man had pitched his stand under the dome of the moonlit heavens, and was plying game with abundant success to himself.

Man after man crowded around this new sensation, and many a poor fool put down his last pouch of dust upon the cards with the hope that he was going to win. But all in vain. He lost every time, while the gambler won every time, and shoved the proceeds down into his pockets with a chuckle.

He was a brawny individual, with a superabundance of fat on his limbs and in his florid face, and was dressed in the fantastic costume of a sporting gent from Texas.

His eyes were particularly sinister in their expression, and he boasted of such a monstrous moustache as but few men could cultivate, it being full and thick, of a sandy hue, and the ends, fully two feet in length, were thrown back over his shoulder.

"Now don't be offish, gentlemen!" this man cried, with a complacency of voice that was designed to be encouraging. "Don't git skeert, or, as my name's Colonel Bill Sandford, I'll pull up stakes an' go ter blazes afore I'll stay in this yere town. See hyar! jest as easy ter pick up ther winnin' card as ter eat buff'ler meat. Look at me, now! Watch my every move and motion, and I'll flip the pasteboards with my eyes shut, and pick up the Queen of Hearts before I open them!"

And the "Colonel" kept his promise, and not only picked up the card, but likewise astonished the "natives."

"No use of backing out because you fail once, feller citizens. All is done simply by the twist of your wrist. Walk up now! Where's the man as dare buck ag'in' fate?"

"Here, every time!" exclaimed a voice, and the Sport Rosebud Rob stepped forward with a cool smile. "Here I am, Sir Monte Knight, and I have come to make you lame!"

Rosebud Rob swaggered forward, his silk hat cocked to one side, glasses bridged upon

his nose, and lavender kids upon his hands.

"Aw! I say, weally, did you—aw—speak to me, sir?" he inquired, squinting reflectively through one eye-glass at the gambler. "Did I—aw—understand you to say that you—aw—would like to flip the—aw—cards with me?"

"Waal, now you bet I could skin ye in about five minutes by the moon!" the Texan assured, complacently. "But I'll take compassion on you, young feller, an' adwise ye not ter buck ag'in' a comet—a regular solid rock practitioner. Ye better go d'rect yer attention ter ther cultivation o' rosebuds an' parfoomery. Ye'll make more outeren it than ye could buckin' ag'in' my three-keerd monte table. Ye ken't flip a card worth two cents!"

"Aw! you weally don't say so!" Rosebud Rob drawled affectedly, with a yawn. "You are deucedly clever with your praises, you know; but, aw! start the game and we will see!"

"Queen of Hearts is to be the winning card!" Bill Sandford announced, expertly throwing the three pasteboards upon the table. "What will ye do, ye little sleek bantam?"

"I'll deposit a hundred dollars that I can pick up the 'queen,' aw!" Rob announced, counting out a stack of greenbacks. "Will you cover it, aw! Sir Gambler?"

"On course!" the Texan replied, triumphantly stacking an equal sum upon the Sport's "chips." "Go ahead, ye durned Yank, an' nominate yer keerd!"

"Aw! anything to accommodate you, aw!" the Sport replied, with a chuckle, and picking up the card nearest to him, he held up the "Queen of Hearts."

Col. Bill Sandford uttered a curse.

A murmur of applause came from the crowd, while the Sport serenely removed and wiped his eye-glasses.

"Hang you!" Sandford growled, "you only blundered into it. Ten to one you couldn't do et ag'in'?"

"Ho! ho!" Rob sneered. "It's all done simply by a twist of your wrist, you know. Bess?"

"Here I ar', pard!" and the girl dare-devil pushed forward from among the crowd. "What'll ye hev wi' sugar in it?"

"I want you to hold my money!" Rosebud Rob replied, sarcastically. "D'ye see that individual across the table, who sports the enormous moustache?"

"Do I?" Bess said, closing one eye obliquely, and regarding the gambler coolly. "Wal, I recky I do thet same. Ye mean the chap wi' er hoss's tail sproutin' frum his upper jaw?"

"The same. Now, ye see, he is an expert gambler, come down here to fleece these

gullible citizens of Cascade Gulch out of their hard earnings. Therefore it behooves me, as a guardian angel o' the peace, to sail in and bu'st his bank!"

"Kerwhoop! Jest my thoughts, exactly!" Baltimore Bess assented.

"Colonel" Bill Sandford from Texas scowled savagely, and seized the cards fiercely, and shuffled them.

"Ye Yankee Brag!" he taunted. "I'll go ye a thousand dollars ag'in' a thousand thet ye kent pick up the Queen of Hearts this time, one trial."

"Stack your chips!" Rosebud Rob cried. "I'll either loosen the strings to your purse, or go bu'sted. Bess, gal, can you lend me a hundred, to fill out my pile? I seem to be a little behind the stake."

"Waal, now, I shouldn't wonder!" and reaching into a buckskin pocket, the girl dare-devil drew forth a handful of gold coins, two of which she gave to Rosebud Rob, who then deposited his wager.

Sandford shuffled the cards with unusual care, and was not a little nervous, for it was seldom that he met so dangerous an opponent.

But although he threw the cards in as dexterous a manner as he knew how, the Sport picked up the fatal "queen" with a laugh, and raked in the stakes.

Sandford swore roundly, and whipped two heavy 45-calibre revolvers from his belt, but before he could raise them, Baltimore Bess had "covered" him.

"No ye don't, Mr. Moustacher!" she advised. "Jest ye restore them aire pop-guns to yer belt, or I'm an embodied spirit of Christopher Columbus ef I don't bore a hole through ye quicker'n a cat kin sneeze. I'll allow I'm capable o' keerin' fer this fragrant rosebud, an' kin lick ary man as says he hain't a hull hoss!"

"Curse you!" Sandford growled, returning his weapons to their holsters, "curse you! I'll get even with you yet. Gentlemen, the bank's broke, and there will be no more gaming to-night!"

And giving the Sport an ugly look, the man from Texas slunk away among the crowd; while Rosebud Rob smiled good-naturedly, as he shoved his winnings into his pocket.

"I reckon that chap won't play monte again, anyhow!" he said, as he sauntered away.

A little later, feminine cries and the clatter of hoofs attracted the attention of the throngs in the gulch in the direction of the stage road which wound down into the valley from the bluffs to the east.

Screams that were fraught with alarm and terror, too.

A horseman—or, rather, a horsewoman,

ROSEBUD ROB AND THE MAN FROM TEXAS

shot out into view, and was seen spurring a white horse madly down the slopes into the heart of the gulch.

Everybody stares ! What is the cause of her affright—her screams—her undue haste ?

Ha ! As she comes nearer, the cause looms into view not far in the rear in the shape of four horsemen, who are lashing their animals to extraordinary exertions.

Mechanically the crowd surged forward to see the thing through.

As she came before the great breastwork of humanity, she drew rein and ceased her screams—sat erect upon her saddle, her hair pushed back in wild confusion, and her face lit in the streaming moonlight.

An involuntary murmur of admiration ran riot among the great crowd. Such a face had never before been seen in the mines —was not often to be seen in a lifetime, if searched for the world over.

It was a brilliantly-expressive face of perfect feature fired by a pair of large brown eyes full of smouldering passion, and half-framed in wavy wreaths of chestnut hair.

After drawing rein, the eyes of the maiden were turned first upon the coming pursuers, and then appealingly upon the crowd. It was evident that she was too much out of breath to speak.

"What is it, miss ?" a big miner asked, whose name was John Mason—a miner he was, with kindly face and tremendous flowing whiskers. "What's the matter ? Be you afeard o' them ar' galoots ?"

"Oh, sir ! do not let them come up ! They are bad, villainous men, who have pursued me here to force me to stay under the guardianship of a man whom I loathe and fear !" the girl cried, passionately. "I appeal to you as men of honour not to let those cruel villains touch me !"

"That settles it, miss," cried a cool voice, and who should push forward but the Spotter Sport, Rosebud Rob, closely followed by the dare-devil, Baltimore Bess, and the bummer, Bully Ike. "We're on deck every time when a woman appeals for aid—we, the Mutual Life Protective Association ! Eh, Bess ?"

"Waal, now, you just bet !" the dare-devil replied.

During this short speech the pursuers drew nearer, and the foremost rode close to the horse of the trembling fugitive and drew rein.

"Thank God, my poor, misguided child, that I have been so successful in finding you !" he said, in an oily tone, and he laid one hand upon her arm. "Come, dear, let us ride out of this crowd and find a hotel. By the earliest stage to-morrow we leave on our return to Blackstone Hall, your

Virginian home."

"No, no ! I will not go—I will not ! Let me alone ! Help me, somebody ! I will not go with this base villain !" the girl fugitive cried, shrinking away in sudden terror.

Rosebud Rob stepped forward. "Mr. Whatever-you-may-call-yourself, jest be kind enough to oblige me by taking your dirty paws off from that young lady !"

"Sir, what do you mean ?" the newcomer cried, in evident surprise, his clutch still upon the maiden's arm.

"I mean just what I said," the Sport assured. "My name is Rosebud Rob, if you want to know it—'a man to suit all circumstances !'"

"Young man, your insolence is pardonable when I come to regard you in your rude surroundings. But you should use more respect in addressing one of God's servants, for you will readily perceive that I am a minister of the Gospel—the Reverend Lucas Alyne, at your service."

Rosebud Rob gave vent to a prolonged whistle, while Baltimore Bess danced about excitedly, her fists doubled up in warlike array.

"I'll bet he's an old liar !" she proclaimed, vociferously ; "two to one he nevyer see'd ther inside o' a church."

The crowd cheered at this point, and the Reverend Lucas grew wrathful.

"Tis a shameful disgrace—an insult to the pulpit !" he growled.

"Bah ! you contemptible hypocrite !" the girl cried, scornfully. "Release me, sir !"

"Nay, I will do nothing of the kind," the Virginian hissed, savagely. "Young man, will you put down your weapon and allow me to pass ? I am an innocent man in a land that I am unacquainted with. I am willing to do everything that is fair, and if you will call upon me to-morrow, I will show you proof that I am an ordained minister of the gospel, and that I am also guardian of this wayward child, who took a wild notion into her head to leave my house and home on no pretext whatever."

"Tis false !" the girl cried, passionately. "I fled from this monster's house because he insulted me."

"It is false—utterly false !" Lucas protested, in holy horror. "My child, will you never see the path of righteousness lying in your way ?"

"Not while you are around, you base wretch !" the girl cried, her eyes flashing vehemently. "You are a hypocrite—a bad, bold man, wearing the cloak of the church to cover your sins—a wolf in sheep's clothing !"

"Young lady," Rosebud Rob said, "I

believe you, and you shall be freed from him for a time at least. Your name is—?"

"Jennie Grey, sir. Oh! if you will please make him let go my arm—I—I—he is pinching me with all his strength."

"Let go of her arm, you old devil!" Rob cried, fiercely, and the menacing way in which his revolvers came up to a level caused the Virginian to relax his hold with a shudder. "Now then, Miss Grey, if you will allow me to assist you to alight, I will hunt up a place for you to stay until further arrangements can be made. Bess, old gal, will you shoot this man if he attempts molestation?"

"You're jest shoutin' I will!" the daredevil assented, covering the Reverend.

"An' hayr, too!" announced the bummer, Bully Ike, who had become somewhat sobered, by this time. "I'm one of ther crowd—ther new candidate from ther 663d congressional deestrict, an' kin pummel the mug of ary pilgrim fer ther drinks!"

As Rosebud Rob gracefully assisted Jennie Grey to alight, the three companions of Alyne, who had halted some distance away, came spurring forward.

One was a dark-complexioned, black-moustached individual of five-and-twenty years, attired in a hunting suit, while upon the faces of his two elder companions was plainly written "river roughs."

The younger man (Alyne's son), as he drew rein with an oath, also drew a revolver.

"Drop that girl, curse you!" he cried, addressing Rosebud Rob, and covering him with his weapon. "Deliver her back to the saddle, or I'll blow your brains out on the spot!"

"Hold up thar, pilgrim!" Baltimore Bess cried, as she and the bummer and the miner, John Mason, spring to the Sport's side. "I'll allow that three of a kind allus beats two pair, and besides, we've got the crowd to back us!"

And a yell from the crowd sealed the verdict.

CHAPTER IV

MORE OF THE INITIATION

We will now return to the scene wherein we last left Photograph Phil.

It was a scene that must have startled the strongest-minded person at first.

The room had been darkened, and before him the Boy Sleuth beheld a couple of human heads perched upon poles, all dripping and gory, as if they had just been cut from bodies.

Beyond these yet, and forming a circle entirely around him, were human skeletons, standing upon the floor, as if possessed of life, while their bony arms and hands were stretched out toward him, and their grinning skulls seemed the impersonation of hideousness inasmuch as they were surrounded by a phosphorescent halo of light.

Perhaps Phil shuddered a little at first, but he speedily regained his composure enough to realize that all of this business had been arranged with a view to frightening the wits out of him. Accordingly he gave vent to a prolonged whistle, denotive of surprise, followed by a wild laugh.

Instantly there was a hiss, and the skeletons and heads suddenly disappeared through the floor, and Diablo and his imps stood in their place.

The transformation occurred so suddenly that Photograph Phil was unable to tell how it was done, but he rightly concluded, by the aid of traps in the floor.

"Thou didst not fear the doomed spirits of the dead that rose out of Hades?" Diablo said, surprise manifested in his tone.

"Nary a time, yer honour!" Phil replied, with a chuckle. "Say, how much will you take to let me photograph that scene? I could make a fortune out of it."

"Thy fortunes are bound unto me, Diablo, the acting superintendent for Satan! I own thee, body and soul!"

"The deuce you do! Git out!"

"Thou art certainly possessed of a brave heart and a glib tongue and a valuable acquisition thou art to mine Infernal Forces. Thou hast yet another degree to take before the administration of the oath!"

"All right—shove ahead!"

"The chief has spoken!" was the grim response, and the man, Diablo, retired to the revolving-throne, where he seated himself, with a wave of his hand.

Phil was next seized and borne to a wooden column which arose from floor to ceiling, near the centre of the room, but a few feet from the throne. He was placed with his back to this, with his face fronting toward the throne, and bound, one rope being passed around his ankles, another at his knees, waist, and throat, making him a helpless prisoner.

The whole band, with the exception of Diablo, then passed around and around the pole, chanting, hissing, and groaning, until a whistle from the chief caused them to cease and pair off into line at either hand.

The whistle was also instrumental in bringing forward, from an adjoining room, the man Diuena, bearing a large kettle of live coals, in which were thrust several irons for the purpose of branding. Phil perceived this, and a hard expression came

over his features, for he realized that he was to be branded with red-hot irons !

A shudder involuntarily ran through his frame.

It was a horror of horrors, truly.

" Ha ! ha ! " Diablo cried, triumphantly. " We will see the bravo squeal, now. Diuena, you know your work. First the ' 40 ' stamp, then the ' skull and cross-bones,' and then the ' fraternity ' stamp."

The Spaniard bowed, and an exultant chuckle seemed to come from beneath his mask.

Diuena seized one of the irons from the fire, and approached.

The iron was made in the shape of a 4 and o, and when imprinted upon anything left the impression of " 40 ." This stamp was six inches in length, by four in width, and was at a white heat.

The fair, smooth breast of the young Sleuth was bare, and was prepared to receive the cruel iron ; nor could the prisoner have burst the bonds had he tried. Nothing, then, remained for him to do but to bear it to the best of his ability.

His teeth were set like a vice, and his whole frame drawn rigid.

Nearer—nearer came the brander, his eyes gleaming through the mask like coals of fire ; his every movement seemed fraught with devilish exultance.

Now he poises the red-hot brand, and then pushes it down savagely against the breast of the captive.

The irons burn deep into the quivering flesh—the sputtering of the burning flesh and the sickening stench that arises but adding to the terrible scene.

At last, apparently satisfied with the pain he had inflicted, Diuena removed his instrument of torture, and stepped back to the kettle.

A livid " 40 " stood revealed upon the breast of Photograph Phil, seared deep into the skin—a terrible mark, never to be obliterated.

All eyes were instantly raised to the face of the young Sleuth, to note the expression there.

It was a *smile of scorn* that mantled the coolly-composed features of the prisoner.

There was not the least visible shade of pain—no tears, nothing but that mocking smile.

Diablo uttered an admiring oath !

Such grit he evidently had not seen before.

" Diuena, thou needst not mark the forehead of the prisoner ! " he said. " Only the body need thy hand touch."

" And why this change, most noble chief ? "

" For reasons best known to myself, Sir Imp. Proceed with thy work. Brand the

prisoner yet with the skull and cross-bones, and pour salt water over him, after which bring me the oath-book."

The instructions were followed to the letter.

" Release him ! " the chief cried, sharply. " A man of his grit deserves the honours of the Infernal Band. Now, then, Sir Photograph Phil, I will read the oath of allegiance, and you are to repeat it after me, word for word, with a revolver against your temple. The least hesitation will cause that revolver to go off, and as a result you will be a dead man."

" Very well, sir. Go ahead with your machine ; I'm ready," Phil replied, grimly.

The chief began to read the oath, and word for word Photograph Phil repeated it after him.

" And now," Diablo said, closing the book, " dost thou understand what thou hast sworn to—what a terrible vow binds you to us, young man ? "

" I should judge that my understanding must be in some degree aroused by this time ! " Phil replied.

" Brothers, release and anoint the prisoner," said Diablo.

This was promptly done.

The bonds which confined the Boy Sleuth were cut, and he stood upon the floor, while ready hands dressed and anointed his burns and rubbed the blood in his limbs into circulation.

He was then helped on with his garments, and stood in the garb in which he had entered.

Diablo then descended from the throne.

" You must now draw for life ! " he commanded, exhibiting the ends of a couple of straws in his hands. " Diuena, you have the first choice. If you draw the short straw twice out of three times, you are doomed to be shot until dead ! "

The Spaniard nodded solemnly, and seized the end of one of the straws, while Photograph Phil took the remaining one.

Diuena drew the short straw.

Again Diablo retired long enough to get the straws arranged, and again did the Spaniard draw the fatal straw.

" You must die ! " the chief said, in a low, hoarse tone, and scarcely had the words left his lips, when the Spaniard dropped to the floor with a bullet through his brain, and Photograph Phil was a regular member of the order of the Dread Infernal Forty—was an outlaw among outlaws.

" Come ! " Diablo said. " I would see you alone, for there is work for you to do."

He led the way, and Photograph Phil followed. He calculated that his initiation was at an end, and that possibly there might be a chance for escape.

Diablo led the way beyond the dais, and stepped within a large circle which had been marked out on the floor, motioning Phil to imitate his example, which he did, and, to his surprise, they began to go rapidly downward into a pit of darkness.

Down—down—Phil was not able to judge how far ere the platform upon which they stood grounded upon a rocky bottom.

"Be careful, now!" cautioned the voice of Diablo. "Here—take my hand, and follow me."

"Photograph Phil will look out for himself, never you fear!" was the reply; "so sail ahead."

They stepped from the platform into a little niche in the rock, and immediately the platform arose rapidly upward to the floor of the outer-world edifice which they had recently quitted.

"Come!" Diablo said, sharply. "Get down upon your hands and knees, and follow at my heels until I bid you rise to your feet."

Phil obeyed, for there was nothing else to do. He found that the passage through which they were to creep was barely large enough to allow of their moving upon hands and knees, and, moreover, that the rocks were wet and slimy.

It seemed many hours ere they emerged from the narrow channel into a large niche in the rocks, the size of an ordinary room.

Here they were enabled to rise to their feet and stretch their cramped limbs. From the niche, or cave, a broader passage ran on—all of these strange excavations seemed to have been wormed out by water-power.

After taking a drink from a canteen Diablo led on.

Pursuing the course of the passage, they soon emerged into a scene which was strange as it was startling.

There was a gigantic plateau of sand and rock of five or six acres' extent, walled upon every side by perpendicular walls of rugged pine-timbered rocks to the height of several hundred feet, leaving a sort of basin, as it were, locked out from the world.

Upon the eastern and western sides of the plateau were rows of small but neatly-arranged log huts or cabins, counting up to the number of forty—twenty upon a side.

And about, within this peculiar scene, were gathered two-score of men, clad in the miner's costume, and wearing upon their faces full black masks. They were engaged in panning out sand or swinging the pick, while, as in one voice, they sang hilariously.

It was a strange, wild scene upon which the moon, from far above, poured a halo of beautiful light.

Diablo stopped in the entrance to the plateau and gazed upon the picture with a smile.

"They are all mine!" he murmured, with evident satisfaction: "all mine, bound to me body and soul. They are my slaves who toil that I may realize gold from their labours. Dost see them, Philip! Every man has lost his tongue; they work, but cannot speak, but can sing.

"Behold the works of a man whose only aim is to serve the devil—whose only delight is in gold and revenge. Ha! the word arouses me to my work. Listen! I have brought you here to see this secret gold-mine—to show you the slaves who work for the Infernal Band of which I am chief. But one man, outside of our order, knows of this secret mine. That man is the Sport, Rosebud Rob. He must die, and I have ordained that you shall go into the outer world, as my agent, to kill this Sport. Then, and only then, will our order realize anything from this mine—then, only, shall we be free from fear of detection."

"And suppose I fail to kill the Sport?" Photograph Phil inquired.

"You shall be set at liberty, to enter into that business which may most please you. But you shall ever be watched as closely as though you were to remain here. A shadow shall ever be upon your track that will note your every action and report to me. Any attempt of yours to leave Cascade City will be thwarted by my band; any attempt at treachery on your part shall be rewarded with a horrible death. One month will be given to you to kill the Sport, or whoever may learn of this secret mine. If the lifeless corpse of the Yankee is not left where I can assure myself of his death, within the month, I shall set my blood-hounds after you, and they shall hunt you down to death, no matter to what part of the earth you may flee!"

Phil bowed.

Indeed, he did not know what else to do under the circumstances. His first thought was to get out into the outer world, and leave his necessary plans until after that.

"There is one more point I wish to advise you on," Captain Diablo said, leading the way out into the plateau, further. "The so-called moontide which washes gold into the valley below is also a work of my organization. To the north-east of this retreat a small stream flows tranquilly along until it reaches a point just beyond us to the south, where it debouches from its subterranean course and pours in a cascade into the gulch. Once a month, three streams which wash gold from the San Guiese mines are turned into Cascade creek, and a great quantity rushes with the

tide, and is led off into this cavern by trap sluices. Much or it also goes over into the gulch, but so insignificant a sum as to be scarcely worth notice in comparison with the Saharas of golden sand which reach us. Several venturesome men have attempted to unravel the seeming mystery of the moontide, but they have been summarily captured and dispatched. We will now blindfold you, and return you to the gulch in a way which you shall know not, for the ways of the Infernal Forty are many and mysterious."

At a signal from the chief, two of the masked miners approached. Phil was securely blindfolded and his hands bound behind his back.

He was then pushed forward, and the way led by Diablo. After much walking, climbing, and descending, he came to the conclusion that they were so doing in order to puzzle him, and when his nostrils were saluted by the fragrance of mountain flowers, and he felt grass beneath his feet, he was aware that they had accomplished their object.

There was a quick cutting of the bonds which bound his hands—then, flying footsteps, and by the time he had torn the bandage from his eyes, the person who had accompanied him was gone.

In vain he glanced in every direction, hoping to catch a glimpse of the person; he had vanished, and the Boy Sleuth found himself standing alone in the valley, near where the stage-road wound down from among the eastern bluffs.

CHAPTER V

MURDER AND ROBBERY

THE tables were turned fairly upon the reverend Virginian and his backers, for evident it was that these citizens of Cascade City, headed as they were by Rob, Bess, and the bummer, were in no way disposed to see foul play.

The black-moustached companion of the reverend gentleman swore furiously as he saw that it would be death to attempt to take the maiden from the Sport, who stood half-supporting her on his strong arm.

"Curses upon you!" he growled. Then turning to the Reverend Lucas, he continued:

"Tis little use arguing with these meddling fools, and we had better retire until we can invoke the aid of the law."

"Nay, my son; I fear we have arrived in a border of Hades, where there is no law. Let me appeal to them once more."

And rising in his stirrups, he glanced into the sea of rugged, hairy faces which were turned upon him—some of them, however, with anything but encouraging expressions.

"My Christian friends," he began, in an affected tone of sorrow, "I wish once more to appeal to your honour—to your manhood, in this my hour of trial. I simply ask a boon that is in your power to grant—the restoration of my poor, misguided ward, who, I may as well tell you, is at times slightly deranged. Therefore, my dear friends, I implore you to restore her to my arms—rescue her from that young ruffian who has, I see, cast an evil and admiring eye upon her."

At these words a hot flush rioted over Rosebud Rob's face, and he made a gentle effort to release himself from the fugitive ward of the Virginian. But with a low cry of alarm she clung closer to his arm, seeming to regard him as her protector.

"Don't give me up to him—please don't let him take me!" she cried, piteously.

"Never fear, for I do not intend to do anything of the kind!" the Sport replied, in a whisper. "Be calm, and I will arrange all for your personal safety."

"Oh! thank you, sir. How can I——"

"Don't mention it, please," he replied, then disengaging himself, he stepped to the big miner, John Mason.

There were a few moments of whispered conversation, after which the Sport went back to his charge, with a gleam of triumph in his eyes.

"Gentlemen!" he said, glancing about, "as this seems rather a peculiar case, and as this young lady has assured us that the reverend gentleman is a scheming hypocrite, unworthy of the care of a young and unprotected lady, I motion that for the present we put her under the guardianship of our esteemed fellow-citizen, John Mason, miner, who is willing to accept the charge, and is willing to vouch for the readiness of his sister, Miss Priscilla, to care for her. You all know Mason to be an honest, faithful citizen, and I feel sure that you will sanction my little arrangement!"

"Hip! yip! horray!" yelled Baltimore Bess, excitedly, and there rose upon the air of the night a tremendous shout of approval, that showed how deeply the public believed in the Sport.

"That settles it!" Rosebud Rob said. "Mason, I turn the young lady over to your care. Miss Grey, I make you acquainted with your future protector, Mr. Mason, whom I am positive you will find in every way a gentleman."

"But, my enemies—they will make him give me up," the girl said.

"Never fear about them, miss!" the

big miner said. "You can bet they'll keep away from the cabin while I'm around—an' when I ain't, thar's my old-maid sister, Prissy—she'll dust 'em now, I tell ye. Priscilla's a reg'lar tearer, when she's a mind to be, you bet!"

"And as fer you!" Rosebud Rob said, turning to the Alynes and their backers. "the sooner you 'dust,' the better it will be for your health!"

"Waal, neow, ef that ain't Scripter, ye kin count my vote out next election!" Baltimore Bess agreed. "Come! hoist yerselves, ye pie-faced coyotes. It's one, two, three—bounce; an' ef ye don't bounce, I'll assist ter bounce ye, you hear *me!*!"

Evidently the party came to the conclusion that "bounce" was their only alternative, for wheeling their horses, they galloped away through the town, without a backward glance.

Then, Rosebud Rob offered Jennie his arm, and motioned for Mason to lead the way, which he did, the crowd parting to let them through.

"I owe you a great deal," she said, as she put her fair, soft hand in that of the Sport, just as Mason's cabin loomed up before them, "and, being penniless, I am afraid it will be a long time before I can repay you for your kindness."

"The longer the better," Rosebud Rob replied, coolly, as he pressed her hand warmly, "for I should hope to be shot if I ever was tempted to take pay for a service done a lady. Please do not mention it again."

And, with a quiet laugh, he shook hands for the last time, and, bidding her good-evening, sauntered back into the heart of the town—for the cabin of John Mason stood partly back against the bluffs, somewhat isolated from other habitations.

The night being warm the door was wide open, and a bright light streamed therefrom, cheerily.

"It ain't much o' a palace, miss," Mason said, humbly, "but it's a purty snug leetle home after all, an' I reckon a pilgrim orter be satisfied wi' what he can afford, in this world."

"You speak very truthfully, sir," Jennie replied; "and I am sure I shall like my new home. Only, I feel ashamed that I have no money with which to compensate you for your trouble."

"Tut! tut! don't speak of it, little lady. Your bright an' cheery presence will more'n pay for what little you eat an' sleep. Come right along inside, and let's find Priscilla."

Priscilla Mason was easily found. She was seated before a table, paring potatoes, preparatory for the morning, and humming an ancient Sabbath-school song, which she

must have committed to memory years before, when she was a blooming young maiden. For Priscilla could now be safely called an old maid, when five-and-forty years had dragged over her head, and left furrows and wrinkles in her pinched and bony countenance.

"Well, John Miner! is that you?" she exclaimed, in a shrill, harsh voice. "I don't see what keeps you out-of-doors so late every night. You know what the Good Book says about the evils of staying out late of nights. Oh, deary! it makes me sick to be always a-jawin' of you, John Miner."

"Then, for Heaven's sake! don't everlastingly make a habit of it, Prissy. But look here, if you can possibly take your hand off from that potato-pan, and see what a present I have got for you!"

Miss Priscilla did look—then bounded to her feet with a feminine shriek, and away went the potatoes and pan upon the floor.

"You, John Miner!" she gasped; "you—you gone and tied a woman to your coat-tails!"

"Hold on now, Prissy; don't get off ther belt, all ter once. This young lady has been placed in our protection by the miners, and we are to keep away a passel o' galoots who hev laid claims ter her. That's all—so quiet yourself."

"Dew tell!" Miss Priscilla gasped, hastily picking up her potatoes, and sprucing about, wonderfully. "So ye're a regular leetle her'ine, eh, miss, like they tell us about in the novels? Laws! who'd 'a' thought? John Miner, do you go to the grocery and get some tea at once, for the canister is clean gone empty, and there's nothing so strengthening to the nerves as a good cup of tea."

A plain but substantial meal of venison, oatmeal, and corn-bread, with a choice of fresh milk or tea, was soon set upon the table, and thankfully the new ward of John Miner proceeded to do justice to it.

The meal finished, she was shown to a snug little room, which Miss Priscilla assured her was to be her own; and after bidding the hostess good-night, the fugitive retired for the night, feeling a greater sense of safety than she had for many a long week.

Rosebud Rob, after leaving Jennie Grey in front of Mason's cabin, sauntered back into the town.

As he was passing the Big Lode Bank, the only stone structure, by the way, in the town, Mr. Mark Manners, the gentlemanly cashier and book-keeper, came out, locking and closing the door after him.

The Sport nodded pleasantly, and was passing on, when Manners called him back,

with a troubled expression upon his face.

"What is it?" Rosebud asked, returning in some surprise, for he had never known Manners intimately.

"Oh! I was a little worried, and wished to consult you," the clerk said, seating himself, and producing a case of cigars. "You are well posted as to the evil element in this place, and perhaps can advise me what to do."

"Maybe I can, if you open up your batteries, so that I can see what you are driving at."

"Well, in the first place, we are kind of worried, because we have an overstock of gold on hand, which we have no immediate chance to ship, as the 'Ironclad' will not get around here in a month again. Had I not, from your several acts, learned to trust you implicitly, I should not tell you this. Perhaps you will be surprised when I tell you that there is a half a million of dollars in gold inside these walls, in addition to the cash assets of the bank itself."

Evidently the Sport was surprised, for he gave vent to a quiet whistle.

"And you feel rather spookish wi' sech a grist in the tiller, eh?"

"Yes, especially as men have been caught in the act of watching the bank upon several occasions of late, after dark. Do you believe our bank is in any danger?"

"Not if you keep it guarded. How many persons know that you have so much wealth on hand?"

"None, excepting yourself, Millicent Vere, and the officers of the bank."

"Ah! who is this Millicent Vere, of whom you speak?"

"Oh! she is all right. The daughter of a widow, down below here. I have known her some time, and believe her perfectly honest or I shouldn't have entrusted her with so important a secret."

"Well, maybe you did right, and maybe you didn't," the Sport observed, thoughtfully. "I wouldn't trust such a secret with a woman, unless she were my wife, and then I should want a muzzle on her tongue."

And so saying, he sauntered away down the gulch, leaving Mark Manners sitting upon the bank steps.

From that night dated Cascade City's history in the annals of crime.

For in the early dawn of the morning the startling intelligence was heralded abroad that a robbery had been perpetrated at the Big Lode Bank, and the watchman, Ike Caruthers, and the cashier, Mark Manners, had been killed.

The news spread like wildfire, and vast crowds quickly gathered in the vicinity of the bank.

Rosebud Rob had been among the first upon the spot after the alarm was given, and he was speedily joined by half a dozen others, among whom were Baltimore Bess, Bully Ike, the bummer, and Photograph Phil.

The dastardly work had been committed within the bank, for Manners and the man Caruthers lay upon the counting-room floor, a bullet-hole in each of their temples telling how they had died.

The place, even to the single vault, had been ransacked of everything of money value, and such articles as were not portable had been smashed, or damaged to a great extent.

And over the kalsomined walls were written, with the devices of skull and cross-bones, the words:

"This is the work of Diablo and his Infernal Forty!"

"That explains it," Rosebud Rob said, pointing to the inscription. "It is the work of that human ghoul, Diablo. In the dead of night they have somehow contrived to surprise Manners and the guard, and murdered them in cold blood."

As he finished speaking, Baltimore Bess approached, and as she caught sight of the deathly face of Manners lying upon the floor she suddenly grew very white, gave vent to a strange, painful cry, and in a dead faint would have fallen, had it not been for Rosebud Rob, who caught her and broke her fall.

Bess soon regained her consciousness.

Hers was a strong constitution, and she ever rallied quickly.

"Come!" Rosebud said, in a low tone, "you had better leave this place. Let me assist you——"

"No, Mr. Mapleton, thanking you all the same. I am stronger now, and can go myself and alone. I stop with Mrs. Lyoniel, up the gulch, and can easily go there."

Then she turned and left the bank.

There was a surging crowd gathered on the outside, but they parted, respectfully, for her to pass through, for all in the gulch city knew that she would brook no indignity or familiarity.

In the meantime, the bodies of the murdered men were taken to their respective homes, where they were prepared for burial.

Rosebud Rob, ever on hand and accommodating, superintended the arrangement of the bodies for burial, and such things as were needed he purchased with his own means. It was his way of doing a kindness.

After everything was prepared he went back to the bank, and had a short conversation with the directors.

They were men-about-town who had

accumulated some wealth and put it into the banking business.

Their respective fortunes were now broke, as well as those of the depositors, until the money could be recovered.

There was a meeting between the depositors and officers, and all agreed, by unanimous vote, that the Sport was the man to put upon the trail.

After some thought, together with an offer of one-third the booty recaptured, Rosebud Rob signified his willingness to hunt up the perpetrators of the robbery and murder, provided sufficient time was given him for his purpose.

He then left the bank, and turned his footsteps toward the cabin of the miner, John Mason.

CHAPTER VI

JENNIE GREY'S STORY

As he approached the cabin he perceived Jennie sitting in the doorway, engaged in paring some wild apples, which had grown upon a tree nigh at hand. She was attired in a wrapper, which had evidently some day belonged to Miss Priscilla, and wore one of the latter's aprons—altogether making a charming picture.

She arose with a welcoming smile, and put forth her fair little hands trustingly into the Sport's rougher ones, as he came up to where she was standing.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you, sir. One never forgets a friend, I believe, in an hour of need"; and she laughed, showing her pearly teeth to advantage.

"Thank you for the compliment," Rob replied, leaning against the doorpost, and gazing down upon her as she resumed her seat.

"Pray be seated," she said, and made room for him in the wide doorway; nor was he loth to accept a position near this fair girl, in whom he was becoming more and more interested. She was modest and refined—somehow so different from the women generally encountered in the mines.

She then told him something about her past history. "Some five years ago," she said, "after the sudden death of my mother, my father found his pecuniary circumstances greatly embarrassed, and determined to seek his fortune anew in the Western territories, where gold was to be found for the digging. Our grand old estate, called Lionsfold, was threatened by the auctioneer's hammer, unless money could be raised to pay off certain debts, and in a blind moment my father turned to this Lucas

Alyne, who was the minister of our parish, and requested a loan of money, as the minister was said to have more money than he could conveniently use.

"Alyne at once consented to loan enough money to papa to square up all his debts, provided a mortgage was given him upon Lionsfold, to be foreclosed in seven years if the money was not returned with six per cent. interest."

"How much money did your father borrow of this money-lending minister, Miss Grey?"

"Ten thousand dollars, sir; and it took every cent to pay up the long-standing debts, with the exception of barely enough to bring my father into the West, where he hoped in a few years to earn enough to redeem the mortgage held by Lucas Alyne against Lionsfold. Alas! how one's hopes may be blasted!"

"In the meantime, we were to be left under the guardianship of the pastor, Lucas Alyne—in saying *we*, I refer to my elder sister Pauline, and myself. Poor papa had every confidence in Mr. Alyne—indeed, the whole parish believed him to be a moral and self-sacrificing Christian man, and therefore we were left under his guardianship, until papa should return, or until we should become of age. Having arranged all to his satisfaction, and believing that his children were in the best of care, poor papa set out for the West.

"And we have never heard from him since."

"The first two years of our stay at Lionsfold, whither Lucas Alyne had removed his family, were endurable because Paulie and I were much in school, and, too, Mrs. Alyne was alive. She was a kind, good lady, and although we obtained an insight into her husband's nature, and that of her son, she did all in her power to screen their sinister acts from our observation. Nevertheless, we both grew to regard the father and son with aversion."

"At the end of the second year after my father's departure—which, by the way, was three years ago this month—Mrs. Alyne died, and we, two young, inexperienced girls, were left alone to battle with the two wolves in sheep's clothing. For, though a preceptress or governess was provided to look after us, she was literally our enemy, being in all the schemes of the minister and his son, and we received nearly as many insults as though she were not in the house."

"Paulie was at this juncture eighteen years of age, while I was but sixteen; but we were both plucky, to some extent, and fought our enemies like young rebels. But soon there came a change. Paulie fell in love with a handsome young lawyer, and

I believed that he returned her pure affection, until he absconded with a large amount of funds, which had been entrusted to his keeping, and left her a cold, cruel letter, stating that he had but been trifling with her—that he had not the least spark of affection for her—bidding her seek another lover who would be more befitting to her station in life. Poor Paulie! It nearly broke her heart for a while, she loved him so; then she grew changed—was no longer herself, but a wild, reckless, harum-scarum girl. Nor was I greatly surprised at the news that came to me one morning.

"It came in the shape of a note from Paulie, stating that she still loved her deserting lover, Dick Turner, and, in search of him, had gone out into the world.

"The Alynes made every effort to recapture her, but all to no avail, and they therefore turned upon me. Thank God that I am at last temporarily out of the power of my enemies!"

"The mortgage has not been foreclosed upon Lionsfold, yet, then?"

"No; nor can it be for several years yet. The property, being in close proximity to a growing city, has, in the interval, greatly advanced in value, and consequently, the Alynes are desirous of retaining possession of it. In order to do this, the reverend reprobate proposes to marry me to himself, and thus secure it. For neither the father nor the son will listen to anything else than that poor papa is dead."

"They may slip up on their calculation," Rosebud Rob said, rising. "I thank you, Miss Jennie, for what you have told me, for it may perhaps enable me to serve you further in your trials. I must bid you good-morning now, hoping you may find your new home abundant with comforts which breed contentment."

"But, you must come and see me once in a while," she said, offering her fair, shapely hand.

The Sport raised the pretty hand gallantly to his lips, saluted, and then strode away, just as the dare-devil, Baltimore Bess, crossed the gulch at right-angles, not far away.

That her sharp gaze had seen the parting, the Sport felt sure, and a peculiar flush dyed his cheek as he approached the spot where she had halted, evidently waiting for him to come up.

"So! so!" she exclaimed, in an attempted merry tone, which Rosebud Rob could see was feigned. "The Romeo has found his Juliet, eh, in the waif of a romantic adventure?"

"Why so, Bess? Cannot a fellow be gallant without his motives being misjudged, eh, old gal?"

"Oh! it's all right," she replied, with a light laugh. "It's none of my business, of course."

"And why not, Bess? Of late we've been sort of pals, and got along first rate, for our interests seemed mutual."

"You jest bet on it, they were, Sport! But that was before you tackled on to a new lode—that is to say, before you took a new responsibility upon your hands."

"What do you mean, Bess?"

"Oh, nothing! nothing!" she said, hastily, turning her face partly away that he might not see the moisture in her eyes. "I hear that you are going to undertake the capture of this man Diablo?"

"Yes, and shall want you to help me," he said.

"When you want me—whistle!" she said: "I will be ready."

"Bess, why do you not call upon the girl at the cabin yonder? You are nearer her age than any other woman in the mines. She is a sweet little thing."

"I haven't the least doubt of it," she replied, a spice of sarcasm in her tone—"leastwise, the fragrant rosebud and the honey-bee are sometimes associated together. Perhaps I shall visit the young lady soon."

And with a smile, she walked away in a different direction than that taken by the Sport, as he wended his steps toward his hotel.

All that day, the excitement was unprecedented in Cascade City.

Men lay idle in order to participate in a general gossip about the tragedy.

During the day Rosebud Rob sauntered about here and there, keeping his eye "peeled," to use a figurative expression, and hearing as much as possible without saying anything. It occurred to him that the dead cashier had made mention of Millicent Vere as being in the secret of the large amount of bullion in the bank. By careful inquiry he managed to ascertain the dwelling occupied by the Veres. It was a sort of hut of logs, which had been hastily thrown together—could scarcely be called a cabin, and was not inviting as a habitation.

He lingered about in the neighbourhood until some person issued therefrom, which proved to be a young woman.

As near as he could learn, she was comely of face and form, but poorly dressed. More the Spotter Sport could not ascertain.

He then went to the shanty hotel where he boarded, and took his supper, after which he set out once more upon the gulch street.

As the evening progressed, he dropped into one of the many saloons devoted to drinking, gambling, and concerts.

Not that the Sport had any desire or intention to gamble or drink, but he always found some new phase of character to study out.

It happened that he was the person necessary to produce a first-class row, as usual.

The Easterner, Jean Alyne, and his two companions, Peanut Joe and Stumpy Sam, were ranged along the bar, among others, pouring down the vile decoctions served up under the name of whisky.

The roughs took no notice of the Sport, although it was evident that they were aware of his presence.

The entrance of the irrepressible Bully Ike seemed to be the starting-pin for a row.

For his coming was with the usual blustering swagger and flow of gab.

"Hayr I am, feller citizens—Bully Ike, the bruiser, right frum ther 663d Congreshional deestrict, you bet. Looke out, now—a reg'lar old tarantula am I! a second cuzzin ter an 'arthquake, an' unkle ter a hurricane, an' a nephew ter an electric thunderbolt. An' the fac' that I'm jest in trim ter-night, wi' an ekal ballast on both sides, prompts me ter make ther gratuitous an' iiberal wager that I can put er wreath o' crape o'er ther eve o' any galoot in ther room, for ther drinks!"

Few who knew the irrepressible bummer would have thought of taking sides against him, for he was an expert in fisticular amusements albeit his appearance was against him.

But the two low-browed, sinister-faced companions of Jean Alyne were unaware of the bummer's prowess, and accordingly stepped forward.

Two more ruffianly-looking fellows probably never before came from the East.

"Say, look heer," Peanut Joe grunted, "did ye say ye ked lick me fer ther drinks?"

"I reckon them's w'at I sed, an' I don't nevyer chaw ther retrospective."

"Oh! ye don't, eh? Mebbe ye don't know what fer style o' hair-pins we are—me an' my pard, yonder? We're Bowery roughs, we ar'—Bowery roughs, right from ther city of New York, you heer me?"

"An' you heer *me*! Hayr's old Bully Ike right frum ther 663d Congreshional deestrict, as kin lick ary galoot that evyer emigrated from severarial New York cities!"

And to prove his assertion the apparently-stiffened old bummer was all lithe and active in an instant, and springing upon the New York ruffian, dealt him a terrible blow upon the end of his proboscis which caused the

unlucky braggart to go sprawling upon the floor.

And when Stumpy Sam and Jean Alyne sprang forward, they followed in the wake of Peanut Joe; whereupon there was an ominous drawing of revolvers!

CHAPTER VII

THE WOUNDED SPORT

EVIDENT it was that the life of the bummer was in danger, as there were savage looks among the roughs who thronged the saloon, and they grew more threatening as Jean Alyne rose to his feet, with a frightful oath.

"Kill the son of a sea-cook—knife him—fill his carcass full of lead!" he roared, staggering blindly about. "I'll give a hundred dollars to the one who'll fetch me the old cuss's scalp!"

A dozen sprang forward toward the bummer! Knives and pistols were held significantly in hand.

But there was something which caused them to pause—a single shot, which brought one of the ruffians writhing to the floor, and then Rosebud Rob stepped readily to the bummer's side, a pair of handsomely-mounted six-shooters in hand.

At the same instant the door opened, and Baltimore Bess and John Mason stepped inside. Comprehending the situation at a glance, they unhesitatingly joined sides with the Sport and the bummer, just as the former cried out:

"Come on, you black-hearted cut-throats, if you want to fight it out on this line! You'll find you don't quite run this town yet awhile, if I know myself!"

The ruffians, after imbibing large quantities of poor whisky, were stimulated up to the fighting point, and did not need more than ordinary coaxing to engage in a pitched battle.

With wild howls they now sprang forward, firing as they came.

The shots detonated thick and fast; yells of human agony were heard; missiles were hurled promiscuously through the air, and there was the accompanying crashing of bottles and cheap mirrors.

Bully Ike went down from a club-blow upon the forehead in the first of the battle. But Rosebud Rob, Bess, and John Mason fought like tigers caged in their lairs; but Rosebud Rob soon staggered and fell.

Baltimore Bess saw him, and a gasp of horror escaped her lips.

"Fight them off until I can get him out, Mason!" she whispered in the miner's ear.

"I fear that the devils have done for the Sport."

The words seemed to inspire the miner with renewed strength and courage. He seized the stout post of a shattered chair, swung it aloft, and sprang forward in the face of half a dozen men as brawny as himself.

Swish! The ponderous weapon hissed through the air and dropped the foremost tough like a log, while in alarm the remaining five retreated, step by step, until they were forced back into the gambling-room.

Here, Mason quickly slammed shut and barred the door, thus temporarily imprisoning his foes.

He then turned in time to see Baltimore Bess leaving the room, carrying the inanimate form of the Sport in her arms as if it had been a light rifle she were carrying.

Dragging the senseless bummer out into the gulch, John Mason set off toward his own home, for he was severely wounded in several places, and was growing weak from loss of blood.

Baltimore Bess in the meantime carried the Sport from the saloon and to the house of the widow lady with whom she boarded.

She bore the Sport upstairs to her own room, as every other apartment in the widow's shanty was occupied by boarders.

Among them was a young physician, and while Bess and the widow retired, he was left to make an examination of the Sport's injuries.

A half-hour of anxious suspense it was to the girl before the physician came down to the parlour, where she was seated, attired, not now in her male suit, but in a neatly-fitting dress more suiting to her sex.

Scarcely the same person did she look; in her own attire the dare-devil was lost.

There was an eager, anxious look in her eyes, though, as the doctor entered, and she half arose from her seat, the words of inquiry trembling upon her lips:

"Mr. Mapleton—is he badly hurt?"

"Not dangerously, I guess," was the reply. "The bullet tore a passage not far from his heart, but I have extracted it safely, and all that is required now is for him to keep in bed a day or so, for his is the flesh that quickly mends."

"Could I see Mr. Mapleton?"

"Certainly. There could be no harm in it, unless he were to get excited, which might not aid his recovery."

Baltimore Bess hastened upstairs and into the room of the sick man.

The Sport was bolstered up in bed, and although there was a pale streak about his lips, he appeared his own cheerful self. He started as Bess came in.

He had never seen her in feminine attire

before, nor known how wondrously pretty she could be as a woman.

"I am so glad you are not dangerously hurt," she said, taking his hand between her own. "Do you know I never fought so desperately before as I did to-night? I was just in the right mood for a pitched battle with somebody," and she gave vent to her old reckless laugh.

"Bess, you are a strange girl—or rather a woman," Rosebud Rob said, gazing thoughtfully into her face. "Why did you bring me here—why not have taken me to my hotel, or to—"

"Mason's!" she interrupted—"no, *never* there! I wanted you here, where I could see that you were cared for. Is not that enough for you to know at present?"

"Well, yes, I suppose it will have to do," he replied, with a faint smile. "I shall try, however, to get well very soon. The work of that Diablo must be attended to as soon as possible."

"Then you would not even thank me for bringing you here?" she said, looking away to hide the tears that sprang to her eyes.

"Most assuredly I thank you," he replied: "I should be a brute if I didn't. And I am also glad you brought me here, if it will in any way add to your happiness. There, brush away those jealous tears, Bess; you are getting out of your old sorts. I shall be wishing directly, that Miss Grey was anywhere else than in Cascade City."

"I wish it already, Mr. Mapleton," was the reply, in a choked voice. "Please don't think me a fool, or vindictive, but I cannot think of that girl without a pang of—"

"Jealousy," he said, finishing for her. "Own the truth, Bess—is that not it?"

"Yes, if you wish. I am weak for telling you so, but I cannot help it," was the reply.

She still kept her face averted, but he could judge by the tremor which passed over her form that she was greatly agitated.

"Bess," he said, reaching and taking her hand and raising it to his lips, even though the effort cost him pain, "you are very good and kind, and I think I can comprehend something of your feelings. Leave me now, and return when you are calmer, and, above all, entertain no thoughts of jealousy against that pure-minded, innocent girl in the care of John Mason."

She arose from the chair by the bedside, and turned her gaze upon him—a look that startled him, it was so pregnant of thankful gratification. And then, before he could check her, she had bent and kissed him softly upon the forehead—turned and glided from the room.

Soon he fell asleep. How long he slept he knew not, but he was awakened by

an almost imperceptible touch upon the arm.

Opening his eyes, he saw a man's figure standing beside the bed—a figure wrapped in a long black cloak, with a mask upon the face.

He was startled at first, for it was something to him unexpected. But when he saw that the gentleman of the night carried no weapons, visible, his curiosity became greater.

"Well?" he finally interrogated.

"Sh!" the other whispered, raising a finger, warningly. "Not so loud, or you will disturb the house, and I am sure you wouldn't wish to get a friend into trouble."

"A friend?"

"Yes—a friend, in disguise. I shall have to communicate to you my intelligence, in a low tone, as no doubt ears are eagerly listening to hear what I tell you. Several times I have been upon the point of telling you, but my motives have been interpreted by unseen enemies, and I have been warned by a hiss to desist. Therefore, my coming here to-night is secret.

"I have come to warn you that the desperado, Diablo, is seeking your life. He evidently hates you, and will endeavour to settle accounts with you, while you are lying here in bed. Therefore, let me advise you to keep your revolvers handy, and do most of your sleeping in the daytime. Heed my warning, and be watchful."

Then turning, the masked forewarner stole softly from the room, and descended the stairs, which were dark, the lights having all been put out for the night.

Softly opening the door, he stepped out into the night.

All was dark, the moon being under a cloud; and the gulch was nearly deserted by people, a few drunken stragglers being the only ones abroad.

No, not the only ones, for as the masked man stepped out into the open air, three others quickly surrounded him, they all being masked like himself.

"Sh!" one said, as the disguised prowler leaped back and drew a stout lignum-vitæ club from under his covering; nor did he wait for a conclusion of the warning, but springing forward like a panther, he laid out the first two at a stroke.

The other gent of the night evidently had no aspirations to share the others' fate, and turning, he bolted for dear life.

Photograph Phil—for it was he who had visited Rosebud Rob—gave vent to a low laugh, as he watched his Infernal Brother dash away into the darkness.

"Too much of a good thing was not to his taste," the young Sleuth muttered.

"Now, then, let's see who these fine birds look like with their masks off."

Producing a small-sized pocket bull's-eye lantern, he knelt beside the two men whom his club had felled senseless to the earth.

Shoving back the slide, a tiny bar of light shot out into the night, which he threw full into the faces of the two outlaws after removing their masks.

Their faces were smooth, and he could not remember ever having seen them before, but upon their foreheads was a mark which could never be erased—a burnt disfigurement of letters which formed into a simple livid word—"Diablo."

"Ha! ha! as I thought! they were shadows set to watch upon my trail. Let me see: their pulses beat and they live. Shall I not finish 'em up and done with it? No, I'll be more merciful than that—I'll bind and leave them here for the Vigilantes to string up."

He soon had them fixed to suit his notion; then, rising to his feet, he removed his mask, and strode down into the centre of the gulch.

All of a sudden the moon burst out from its concealment, and flooded mother Earth with an unsurpassed brilliancy of mellow light.

Photograph Phil started forward, now, with a half exclamation. The girl Millicent Vere had been crossing his path a few steps away, when the moon burst forth, but started to run when she saw him so close.

It required but a few flying leaps to overtake her, which he did, and placing a hand upon her shoulder, wheeled her about facing him.

"Don't be in a hurry, please," he said, in an authoritative tone. "Where have you been?"

"None of your business, sir! Release me, or I shall cry for help!" the girl gasped, endeavouring to break from his grasp.

"In which case I shall choke blazes out of you," Phil assured. "Now, then, what fetches you out so late at night?"

"It matters not to you, sir!" the girl replied, haughtily.

"Maybe you don't recognize me?"

"Yes—I do not often forget faces."

"Well, you haven't answered my question yet."

"Nor do I intend to, more than to say that I was not out for any evil purpose."

"I doubt the truth of that statement, miss. However, let that question give way to another. What do you know of Diablo and his Infernal Band?"

"I know nothing of the parties you mention—why should I?"

"You do know all about them!" Phil asserted, sternly. "You dropped a pass-

port at my feet, the other night, bearing a skull and cross-bones. That admitted me into the Temple of Bacchus, and I was made a member of the so-styled Infernal Forty!"

A dilation of Millicent Vere's eyes was the only answer.

"I have to thank you for the pain I endured during that accursed initiation, and since. Girl, do you know what you are?—a thief, an outlaw, and a murderer."

The girl put up her hand, as if to ward off a blow—staggered back with a gasp.

"Devil! who are you?"

"One who knows all," Photograph Phil replied. "I have all power over you, and you must assist me!"

"How?" There was a tithe of eagerness in her tone now.

"By obeying me, and bulldozing that cuss, Diablo. What obligations bind you to his service?"

She hesitated.

"Tell me. It will be your own salvation to make a clean breast of it."

"I am under no sworn obligations to the chief, except that it has been to my interest to serve him," was the reply. "Since you have asked me, I will tell you that my brother was a member of Diablo's band—unbeknown, mind you, to my mother, who is old and infirm. My brother did not wish to worry her. At last, my brother was doomed to die, by drawing lots against a new member, and I was sent for, and he entreated me to promise that I would lure as many into the trap as possible, and would marry the chief, Diablo."

"And you promised?"

"I did."

"Foolish girl! But never mind; you shall break that promise, and tarn your hand against that man, Diablo."

"No! no! I cannot, sir—oh! I——"

"Dry up! I say you *shall*, and that settles it," Photograph Phil said, sternly. "Go home now, and await a call from me. My name is Photograph Phil, and when I want you you'll get my card, when I shall expect you to hunt me up. Do you hear?"

"Y-e-s!"

"Then mind that you heed. Disobey me, or attempt treachery, and up you go to the limb of a tree, for complicity in the murder of Mark Manners. Now go!"

She needed not the second command, but sped away with the swiftness of a deer.

CHAPTER VIII

MISS PRISCILLA'S ROMEO

IN the meantime, somewhat of a sensation had struck the town.

It was in the shape of the Reverend Lucas Alyne, who had literally taken to the "stump" and nightly preached to such as would congregate to listen to his discourse.

The flock of lambs who congregated to listen to the sermon were generally miners' wives, to the number of a couple of hundred, just fresh from the kitchen, with hatless heads and sleeves to the elbow.

Among the audience of the feminine persuasion Miss Priscilla Mason did appear.

A thoroughgoing Christian Miss Priscilla undoubtedly was. And when it came to pass that Sister Jones praised the new and good man, Priscilla "went" forthwith. And she arrayed herself in the best out of her wardrobe, and took a front seat upon the ground to listen to the discourse of the eminent Biblical philosopher who had strayed so far among the perils of the wilderness.

And when she caught the beaming and enthusiastic gaze of the good man riveted upon her, she blushed and felt pleased.

This was upon the first night, and Lucas Alyne, designing hypocrite, had played his cards well, for Miss Priscilla went to her humble couch to dream of the gifted servant of the Lord.

John Mason knew nothing of Miss Priscilla's visit to the meeting, or he would have put a stop to it, as he thoroughly despised the man who could wage war against pretty Jennie Grey.

The next night she had gone again.

And through the kindness of Sister Jones, our old maid was formally presented to the "preacher," who after the sermon escorted her to her home, but left her at the door.

From that time on, unknown to either Jennie, or to her brother, Miss Priscilla and the parson met, and while in the heart of the aged girl there was awakened the first love-flame of her life, Lucas Alyne pleaded his case with the ardour of a seventeen-year-old lover, who had mastered the languages and committed Milton and Byron to memory. But an obstacle stood in the path of the two aged lovers—John Mason, and the girl, Jennie.

"But for them, dear Lucas, how gladly would I invite thee to my home, instead of coming out here like a thief to meet you beneath the stars and moon."

"I would, dearest, sweetest Priscilla, that it could be even so," he would reply, with a sigh. "What sweet comfort it would be to see thee ever in my presence, dear Priscilla. If you could ever coax your brother to admit me to your table as a boarder——"

"Ah! if I but could!" with a deeper sigh. "Oh! cruel fate beneath that binds me to a stern brother's will. My sweet

Lucas, hero of my life, if you could but disguise yourself and get into John's favour—”

The Virginian started at the suggestion.

“ It can easily be done, my darling, and for the love of you I will make the daring attempt. ‘ All's fair in love or war,’ you know, and the line applies directly to our case. So fare thee well, my precious, and if a stranger enters thy home, mum's the word, until we are alone. So long as I can keep the secret I bid fair to remain by thy side.”

On the afternoon of the following day (the fourth, by the way, of Rosebud Rob's confinement to his bed), Jennie Grey took a book from John Mason's meagre collection, and wandered down to the old cottonwood upon the banks of the rushing creek.

She had grown less and less expectant of meeting with her foes, and the old cottonwood furnished delightful shelter, under which to sit and read.

Not long had she been seated, however, ere she heard a heavy footstep, and looked up with a startled cry, to behold Jean Alyne standing but a few paces away, regarding her with his evil gaze.

“ Oh ! ho ! ” he exclaimed ; “ so my pretty bird is caught at last, eh ? ”

“ No, Jean Alyne ! your bird is not caught, at all ! ” Jennie cried, springing to her feet, quickly. “ Why have you come here, sir ? ”

The young Virginian chuckled horribly, as he stepped nearer.

“ Why have I come here ? ” he growled. “ Wal, you ought to know. Haven't you always been my friend, and haven't I always been yours ? Hey, we were allus sweet on each other, weren't we ? ”

“ Fool ! ” the ward of John Mason replied, contemptuously. “ I don't believe two mortals ever despised each other more than you and I. Go, sir ! your presence is disgusting.”

“ Humph ! you're as sassy as a gander, girl. See here ! do you know what I came here for this afternoon ? ”

“ No ! nor do I wish to know.”

“ Wal, I'll tell you,” he said, with a leer. “ Oh ! ye needn't try to escape, for I can outrun ye, an' no one looks up this way often. Wal, I come up here to conciliate.”

“ What ? ” Jennie gasped, an expression of mingled surprise and disgust upon her face.

“ To conciliate,” he repeated. “ You see the old man's set a trap for you that you're bound to fall into, an' as the old man an' I've hed a fallin' out, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take you, and we'll go to some

other place and get married. Then his reverence can bounce.”

“ Oh ! ain't you kind ! ” Jennie cried, contemptuously. “ If that is what you came here to say, you can go. I would even consider the proposition of wedding your rascally father ere I'd look at you. Go ! ”

“ Hang you, no ! ” he growled. “ I'll have you, anyhow. My horse is near, and you'll be off in the mountains before you know it. Get ready—here I come ! ” he said, gathering his strength evidently for a leap upon her.

“ And here you go ! ” and springing from a fringe of willows which grew upon the bank of the creek, as he gave vent to the cry, John Mason seized the Virginian about the waist, raised him above his head by the strength of his powerful arms, and hurled him head foremost into the rushing waters of the stream.

“ There, you land-shark ! maybe you'll tackle a defenceless girl again just for the fun of it ! Come, Miss Jennie, I will accompany you to the cabin, where you will be safe.”

That evening, just as dusk was creeping over the room, the physician came in, and after an examination, thought it practicable for the Sport to leave his bed and take very moderate exercise in the open air.

It was joyful news to Rosebud Rob, for he had grown heartily sick and tired of lying abed.

The next morning Rosebud Rob was up and out in the gulch with the rising of the sun. He felt like himself again, for all an occasional twinge of pain came from his breast, where the wound was healing as fast as nature would permit.

Many acquaintances flocked around him and welcomed him back to their midst, among them Photograph Phil and John Mason.

“ And by the way,” the brawny miner remarked, with a good-natured laugh. “ I've been turnin' over in my mind the feasibility of turnin' in an honest penny at keepin' boarders, as well as digging gold. There's Priscilla says she is willin' to keep care on 'em, which with the aid of the little gal, Jennie, she's well able to do. So, as thar's two chaps as want good board and are good to pay fer it, I reckon we'll have to take 'em in.”

“ Who are these men ? ” Rosebud Rob asked, glancing toward the cabin.

“ Oh, both o' them miners and prospectors—one o' 'em from Nevada and t'other from Arizona. Both old-timers, I reckon.”

"What are their names?"

"Oh, one calls himself Jeff Harkins, and the other's name is Bill Greeland. He is the pilgrim who lost so much bullion by the bank robbery. He war well heeled before, but is pretty low now, I reckon—least, so they say."

Bidding the miner good-day, the Sport sauntered from place to place, expecting to find Bess.

But she was not to be found, nor did anybody seem to know what had become of her.

The day passed without incident. The Sport did not visit Jennie Grey. He fought shy, perhaps, out of respect for the feelings of Baltimore Bess, whom he believed not far away.

As Bess had signified her intention of not returning soon, Mrs. Lyoniel still permitted the Sport to occupy the room where he had lain during confinement.

He retired that night and tried to sleep; but it was a poor job at the best, and he was wide awake about midnight, when Mrs. Lyoniel burst open his door.

"For Heaven's sake, Mr. Mapleton!" she cried, "*Diablo and his gang have surrounded my cabin!*"

CHAPTER IX

PHIL ON A NEW TACK

SHE then rushed back down the hall to alarm the rest of her boarders.

Rosebud Rob slid from the bed into his boots and hunting-shirt with wonderful alacrity, and with the exception of putting on his hat and belt, was all ready for the work; for, like the average borderman, his breeches he never removed on retiring at night.

Below stairs the pounding at the heavily-barred door was loud and peremptory.

A plucky little woman was Mrs. Lyoniel, and she bravely descended to the lower floor, although she was careful not to open the door.

"What's wanted?" she demanded, in a shrill voice.

"Keep still in there," replied a hoarse voice. "Do you wish to arouse the town? Open the door and let us in. We want to get the Sport, Rosebud Rob, and then we will go away."

"You can't get in, nor you can't have Rosebud Rob, you ugly robber!" the widow replied, sharply.

"Come! no more tongue, but open up, or down comes your hash factory on a run. Boys, get the torches, and set fire to the

shebang, if she don't open up inside of a jiffy!" cried the voice of the leader, who had previously announced himself to be Diablo.

At this juncture Rosebud Rob, from his window, opened fire upon the gang below with his revolvers, and succeeded in dropping four of them ere a rattling of bullets forced him to dodge back.

Howls of rage now came from below.

"A hundred dollars for a ladder!" roared Diablo. "Fire the cabin! If we can't get them out one way, we can another."

Presently the smell of smoke and the crackling of flames warned the inmates that the cabin had been fired.

Rosebud Rob comprehended the result, and stepping forward to where the most of the inmates were congregated upon the landing, he said:

"It's no use to hold out against the ruffians. I will deliver myself up, and thereby save the rest of you."

"Hold up!" cried the physician; "you will do nothing of the kind. The town people are coming to our assistance."

He spoke truly.

The outlaws had seen their approach, too, evidently, for with baffled yells they leaped upon their horses, and spurred away up the stage-road, among the bluffs, carrying their wounded with them.

When they were gone, the inmates of the burning cabin escaped into the open air, and the flames were put out without much difficulty, but little damage to the cabin having been done.

In the morning Rosebud Rob took a walk to John Mason's cabin, and found Miss Priscilla and Jennie washing dishes, from the breakfast.

He sat down in the doorway, and chatted with them for an hour, then arose to go, as no opportunity was afforded him to see the miner's ward alone.

"By the way, we have two new boarders," Miss Priscilla announced, "just came to breakfast, for the first this morning, and went away to work. If we could have a lively soul like you to board, it would be so much more pleasant—wouldn't it, Jennie?"

"Yes, indeed, aunty," the ward of John Mason replied, a blush stealing over her cheek. "It would, I think."

Rosebud Rob called upon Photograph Phil next, before returning to his room at Mrs. Lyoniel's.

"I have come to see you on business which is of greatest importance," Rosebud Rob said. "I have been putting this and that together, and have come to the conclusion that you are the masked individual who visited me at the widow's and warned

me to look out for Diablo. Am I not right?"

"Yes, you are right," Photograph Phil replied, glancing about to see that nobody was within earshot.

"Very well. I believe that you were forced into this gang, and that you are their bitterest enemy."

"So I am."

"Then listen. I am going to break up that gang, or die in the attempt. To-day a fresh reward has been offered for their capture, and the whole sum now offered amounts to three thousand dollars, part of which you shall share if you will help me with my plans."

"You can depend upon me, reward or no reward. I've no love for these outlaws, you may rest assured."

"Such being the case, it will be a part of your business to set fire to this so-styled temple of Bacchus, which you say is the headquarters of the gang. First, however, tell me—is there not an underground passage leading to some other retreat?"

"There is. It descends from the floor, and from the bottom of a shaft worms its way northward to a mountain-locked pocket or cavern."

"As I thought. There is a passage under yonder cascade, which, no doubt, leads to this identical place. Now, then, to-morrow night, when you can fire the old rookery without being seen, do so, and in a way that cannot fail to demolish the building. Then lie low, and keep a watch upon the two men who are boarding at John Mason's. See that they don't get an opportunity to work any villainy, should that be their purpose; also keep an eye on the young lady, Miss Grey."

Then after a few more instructions, the Spotter Sport strode away toward his lodgings. As he entered the doorway, he came face to face with a man who was coming out—a brawny, bewhiskered individual, with a kindly face, and the attire of a miner and prospector.

"Hello! maybe you are the pilgrim I'm hunting after," he said, blocking the passage with his brawny proportions. "Maybe you are the fellow they call Rosebud Rob?"

"There can be but little doubt that you are gazing upon the genuine representative of that name," the Sport replied, with a smile. "What is your handle, may I be so bold as to inquire?"

"My name reads Bill Greeland, miner, at the election polls," the other replied. "If you are Rosebud Rob, who is in the mouth of every galoot in the gulch, you're the pilgrim I want to see."

"Then walk up to my room with me, and unravel your business," the Sport replied.

They ascended to the Sport's chamber, and the man from Nevada took a chair facing the Sport.

"The reason I hunted you up," he said, "was because I heard that you were going to take a hunt after the robbers who broke open the bank, and relieved me of my whole fortune, some two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in gold."

"Yes, I am just about taking the trail, now, as soon as I can get ready. I suppose you want me to put in a plea for your pile, eh?"

"Exactly. I want you to regain possession of that gold, if possible, and turn it over to me. Yours shall then be a rich reward."

"I shall not forget your case. In the meantime, as you are stopping at Mason's, you will perhaps do me a favour, in exchange."

"Most certainly; you have but to name it, and I promise."

"It is that you keep a protecting eye upon the young lady who is stopping there, under the temporary guardianship of John Mason, where I placed her out of reach of a rascally guardian, who has proved her worst enemy."

A faint smile passed over the miner's face, as he stroked his long beard.

"I ain't much of a hand for lookin' after women," he said, "but I'll keep an eye as you request to the girl's welfare."

"Thank you," Rosebud Rob replied.

Greeland soon took his departure, and then the Spotter Sport prepared for his solitary adventure. Stocking his haversack with cold meats, and filling his ammunition-box with fresh cartridges, he laid out two pairs of revolvers and a knife for use, after which he threw himself upon the bed, to await the falling of night again, when he could go to work, safely.

Jennie Grey had gone down to the claim with John Mason, but the labour of washing sand was monotonous, and ere the first hour had passed, the pretty Virginian was over at Photograph Phil's studio, looking over his pictures, with a great deal of gravity and interest.

"It must be very nice work to take pictures," she said, looking up into Phil's face as he deftly arranged a new stack for her inspection.

"Well, rather, ma'am; it depends if a fellow is naturally lazy, or not. If you find one of the chaps, like myself, for instance, who's made up his mind that he'll get through the world on cheek, and as little work as he can—he's the chap suited for a picture-gallery, every time."

"Then you are not partial to work, eh?" Jennie asked, her big blue eyes roving over

the jolly face of the young artist. " You despise manual labour ? "

" When I can make an honest livelihood by my wits," Phil replied, with a laugh.

" You are a strange young man ! " the little Virginian said ; then asked, candidly : " How old are you ? "

" Grasping after manhood by a few months. May I return the compliment of asking you a like question ? "

" Certainly ; I am 'most seventeen. Will you take my picture ? "

" With all pleasure," Phil replied, gallantly.

Assisting her to a chair, he carefully arranged a series of screens and cloth scenery, after which he popped behind his " masheen." Next he went into a dark wigwam which he had erected, and soon came out again with the slide which he inserted, just as a pretty smile about the mouth of the fair Jennie revealed a glimpse of her pearly teeth.

The picture being a tin-type was soon finished, and Phil handed it over to the owner with considerable pride. For it was really well executed, the features and dress taking well, and the light and shade good.

" Oh ! " Jennie exclaimed, as she glanced at it ; " this is not I, sir."

" Most assuredly, yes. Do you not recognize yourself ? "

" Well, I must give you praise. It is the very best picture I ever had taken. If I could only learn ! "

" You can, perhaps, if I tarry in the gulch long enough."

" Oh ! that's a good fellow ! I begin to like you already. Will you come up to Mr. Mason's to-night, and teach me the first lesson ? "

" The first lesson in what ? " Phil laughingly asked. " In love ? "

" Yes, if you are smart enough to do it," was the sharp but merry answer, as the light-hearted fairy went dancing away, like a butterfly on the wings of golden sunshine.

" You may bet I'll be there ! " Phil said to himself, as he went back to retouching some card negatives. " By Jove ! it would be a huge joke if a fellow of my unpretentious bearing should succeed in winning the daisy away from that gallant, heroic Sport. There's been greater miracles accomplished, too. But stop ! I have other work to do to-night ! "

CHAPTER X

IN THE PASSAGE

We must now return to the night previous, and to our Sport, Rosebud Rob.

As soon as it was dark enough for his purpose, Rosebud Rob armed himself with revolvers, rifle, and knife, and bidding adieu to the cabin, set out through the gulch toward the cascade which poured down over the northern precipice with its accustomed din and roar.

Presently he approached the eastern side of the cascade which tumbled from the rocks into a natural water-worn basin, whence it debouched through the water-course. The sheet hugged close against the wall of rock in front of which it fell, yet the Sport had previously discovered that a narrow foot-ledge ran between the falling water and the rock, the entrance to it being screened by the constant mist.

It was right here that Rosebud Rob's perilous task commenced.

He had no knowledge of the passage, more than of its existence.

Before entering behind the falls, he donned a long and very heavy rubber coat, which was padded, and lined with buffalo-hide.

When he was prepared, with his coat well buttoned up about his head, he took the lantern in his left hand and his knife in the right, and stepped in under the cataract.

He soon became aware that it would require the greatest care to keep upon the narrow footing, so he shot the slide of his lantern, whereupon a flood of light was diffused upon his surroundings.

But the falling mist prevented his seeing anything except a grey stream of vapour around him.

Carefully—step following step in feeling the uncertain passage, every nerve of the Sport was drawn to the highest tension—his knife hand kept ready for instant use.

On—on—on ; at last the mist seemed to grow thinner, and the roar of the cascade less loud and deafening.

Then he paused, and turned out the light—that is, shot back the slide of his lantern, and all was densely dark.

" I must be pretty near out of this confounded passage," he muttered, swinging the lantern at his side, " and now, I must go it blind."

With the stealth of a mouse he glided along, and soon had the satisfaction of discovering himself out of the mist, in a drier passage where footing was safe.

Here he paused again.

He was resolved not to go farther until he had ascertained if there was a guard to the passage. Carefully groping about, he found a boulder, and seated himself upon it. Knowing full well that he had his own time at his disposal, he resolved to take things coolly and by slow degrees.

Fully an hour he sat upon the boulder, and listened faithfully.

But no enemy was so near, evidently, and growing tired of the silence Rosebud Rob rose to his feet, intent upon following the further lead of the strange passage. As he did so, and attempted to peer ahead into the dense depths of blackness, something caught his sharp, never-failing eye, which caused him to sink back upon the boulder with an exclamation.

It was like the flash of a spark upon some black object 'way off in the distance, which lasted but a moment, and then died out, utterly.

"Ha!" the Sport muttered, "there is a guard, but he is some distance away farther up the passage.

By pressing his ear close to the rocky floor, he was enabled to learn the affirmative. Regular steps, very faint, but yet perceptible, were coming down the passage, which, as near as the Sport could guess, ran in a north-westerly direction.

Nearer came the guard, his steps now quite audible, although they were all that denoted his coming.

Rosebud Rob crouched as far back as possible, with the hope that he might escape notice. Still nearer did the guard approach; then stopped, suddenly, in front of the spot where the Sport was crouching.

Firmly Rosebud Rob's fingers closed about the haft of his knife, and he prepared to spring upon his foe. But he did not, for he soon perceived that the guard was not aware of his presence, inasmuch as he seated himself upon the identical rock back of which the Sport was crouching, and began softly whistling some old-time tune.

Rosebud could have thrown his arm about his neck, so close was he to the intruder. He was certainly in a desperate situation, and was put to his wits for some resort to extricate himself from his difficulty.

A happy thought finally struck the Sport. He would take the guard a prisoner!

Cautiously drawing his revolver, he waited until the guard was coughing, when he suddenly cocked it without the click, click, being noticed. The next minute the cold muzzle was pressed against the outlaw's temple, and the Sport spoke in a deep, stern tone:

"Stop! breathe but a word, or move a muscle, and I'll blow your brains out! You are my prisoner, and unless you obey me to the letter, I'll shoot you so quick you can't speak!"

The fellow started with a muttered curse, but made no attempt to reach toward his belt, as Rosebud could see by the aid of his lantern, which he had brought into play.

Reaching forward, he removed the

weapons from his belt and appropriated them to his own use.

"Now you will please stand up and face about," the Sport ordered, in his commanding way.

The guard obeyed sullenly.

"Now, sir," Rosebud Rob said, following him to a standing position, "now, my jewel, do you perceive that my revolver is levelled on a squew-gee with your life pulsator?"

"Yes, cuss yer!" was the reply.

"None of your cussin', you brute! I want you to obey, or drap you go, after which I shall assist you to a shower-bath in under the falls on a strictly Turkish plan. Did it ever fall to your lot to hear of a festive coon whose name is Rosebud Rob?"

The outlaw started and gave vent to an affirmative grunt.

"You he?"

"You stack your chips that I'm the precise character answering to that Sunday-school baptism. For instance, just cast your eyes upon my physiognomy!"

And off came the mask, and the coolly handsome face of the Sport was turned upon the outlaw.

"Well, what d'ye want o' me?" he demanded, surlily, seeming fully satisfied as to the identity of the "man to suit all circumstances."

"First, I want you to discard the wearing of your mask," Rosebud replied, as he restored his own to his face. "Nothing like knowing each other's cast of countenance, you see. It elevates and instructs."

"Guess I won't," the outlaw replied. "You never see'd me, though I've heard o' you in a casual way."

"All the same, take off that mask, just to please me and to save you the moderate expense of a six-foot hole in *terra firma*!"

The fellow obeyed.

As soon as the guard tore away his mask, Rosebud Rob turned the full rays of the lantern upon his face—a rough, stubby countenance the Sport could not remember of seeing before.

"What is your name?" he demanded.

"Jack Jillett," was the sullen reply.

"And you belong to this Diablo's Infernal gang?"

"Can't you read? Diablo's stamp is on my forehead plain enough."

"Yes—so I now perceive. Well, now what shall I do with you? Which way would it be best and easiest for you to die?"

"Not at all. It is unnecessary that I should die, you see, when I may be able to help you!"

"You help me?"

"Certainly. You've fairly caught me, and I surrender to your will. I need not tell you that I am not particularly in love

ROSEBUD ROB AND THE MAN FROM TEXAS

with Diablo, and I'd just as soon bu'st up the league as not."

Rosebud Rob gazed at the man, sharply—searchingly.

"Do you mean this?" he asked, sternly. "Remember, the first sign of treachery I see, my knife shall hunt a passage into your heart!"

"I hear and understand," the outlaw replied, "and I mean all I say. If you will enlist me in your service, I will reward your confidence by strict attention to your commands!"

"By your language, I should judge you had been reared in different surroundings than these, sir?"

"Ay! I have seen better days, years ago, until whisky and gambling took me down the hill."

"What can you tell me about the secrets I wish to learn?"

"Much more than you think. I am general guard of the secret mine, and, in fact, of the whole concern. My orders are next only to the chief's, and none dare to question me but him. He seldom notices me."

"How many men has this Diablo under his control altogether?"

"Eighty odd, I believe, including the miners and the forty who run the road-agent business."

"We are two against eighty! Phew! an unhealthy aspect of affairs—for the eighty, I should say. We must play our cards slow but sure, in order to have any show for winning."

"Ay, all depends upon our success in one item," Jillett said.

"And what is that?"

"In slaying Diablo."

"But I wish to capture him."

"Nevertheless, take my advice and strike him down, at the first opportunity. The man is possessed of the devil. Allow him liberty and he will outwit old Satan himself, mark my words."

"I fear him not, and would rather capture him and deliver him up to justice. Come! let us move on, for I would to the work."

"Nay, you must not hurry. I will first go to the secret cavern, so that the way may be prepared. You remain here, and trust all to me. If I do not return before to-morrow night at this time, be not uneasy. All depends how successful I am in maturing my plans."

And after a few regulations between them, as to signals, and so forth, the outlaw stole noiselessly away, up the passage, leaving the Sport to make the best of his situation.

Which he proceeded to do.

Turning out his light, he threw himself

upon a convenient rock, and went off into a light but refreshing slumber.

Presently the Sport awoke with a start, and sat bolt upright.

Footsteps were coming down the passage, before him—friend or foe?

CHAPTER XI

WOOING IMPROMPTU

LEAVING the Sport still in the passage, we must look on into the next day—ay, into the following night.

After Jennie Grey left him, Photograph Phil continued retouching pictures until the sun went down, when he locked up his apparatus in a huge chest in his wagon and adjourned to a hotel for his supper.

After he had satisfied his appetite, he spent an hour in making himself presentable, after which he started toward John Mason's parlour.

The family were at supper when the Boy Sleuth arrived at the cabin, but fair Jennie hastily arose and escorted Phil into the parlour, joy shining in her beautiful blue eyes.

"Do be seated, and teach me the merry, merry art of taking photographs," she said, leading Phil to a sofa, and sitting down beside him. "I am all impatience to learn so desirable an art."

"There, I beg," Phil replied. "As I'm a live sinner, I actually forgot to bring along my book of instructions. Isn't it a shame? I will start now for it."

"No, you will do nothing of the kind, sir," Jennie said, decidedly. "If two young people cannot get along for an evening without instructions, they ought to be blackballed."

"Well, just as you say. Lead ahead upon anything from politics to love; from dry goods to mineral ore, and I will endeavour to instruct you to the best of my ability."

"Oh! you naughty boy! To be sure, what should I know about mineral ore, or politics, or—"

"Or love," Phil said for her. "That is a dainty subject to handle, so we will discard it."

"No, we won't!" replied Jennie firmly. "Love is the very subject. I love flowers and poetry, nice cats, fruit, sunshine and photographers, and—"

"And photographers?" Phil ejaculated, gradually becoming more and more amazed.

"You don't really mean to—"

"Yes, I just mean to say that I love you!"

the little minx cried, defiantly. "Now, say as much for yourself, if you dare!"

"Why! why—" Phil began, beginning to grow as red as a cherry, conscious that her saucy eyes were trying to peer into his—that her fair round hand had clasped his own.

The truth was he was in just such a fix as he had never been in before.

"There! there!" she said, the next minute, throwing her arms around his neck, and kissing him, "don't be scared a bit, for I don't mean half of it you know. I am one of the awfulest madcaps you ever saw, and I do so love to tease anybody."

"And so you selected me for a victim, eh?" Phil managed to ask.

"Of course I did, you great good fellow. I knew I could mix you all up like molasses candy, the first glance I got of you, this afternoon. I knew you were the one I could amuse myself with, without being misconstrued, or risk being insulted."

"Well, since you have seemingly derived considerable amusement from my presence, you will perhaps be satisfied to let me take my departure," Phil said, a little seriously.

"No, you bet I won't!" the little minx declared, emphatically.

"Phew! if you ain't a brick, I never saw one. But since you will have courtship, my little irrepressible, I propose upon the spot."

"Propose that we get married?"

"Propose that we take a walk out in the early moonlight, and sip the fragrance of ambrosia from the cup of the moon."

"Oh, dear! fan me quick, or I shall faint—I know I shall!" the little Virginian cried, in much alarm. "Oh! Mr. Phil, if you have any regard for my nerves, you will never start off so gushingly again."

And then she burst into a merry laugh, in which Phil joined her.

"Will you marry me, my pretty?" Phil asked, now in dead earnest.

"Of course I will, Phil, and you see if I don't make you a good and faithful, loving wife."

Phil was justly proud of his new charge, and Jennie was content to know that his presence was all-desirable to her happiness.

"We are both rather young to get married my pet," Phil remarked, "and yet—"

"Pshaw! we are not a bit too young, Phil. I believe in people starting early in life, and by striving together they can soon get a foothold with their fellows, so that by and by they will have enough to keep them comfortable in their old age."

Jennie, you are a philosophic jewel, and

a prize I would not part with for the world. You have but to name the day, and I'll be on hand."

"I'll think when I should like it to be, and let you know to-morrow, Phil."

He remained by her side, and they, as lovers will, talked over the prospects of a happy future, until the little parlour-clock struck ten, ushering in the coming of Miss Priscilla from Mrs. Jones's; then Phil kissed his little betrothed, and took his departure, promising to call the next day.

We must again return to the Sport, who, awakening suddenly, heard footsteps coming down the passage toward him.

He was uncertain if or not it were Jack Jillett, and he resolved to be on guard lest it should be a foe. Drawing his revolver, he crouched back into the darkest corner and waited.

Nearer and nearer came the footsteps, and then a shrill whisper:

"'Sh! do not be scart; it is Jillett. Are you ready?"

"Before I answer I'll make sure," Rosebud Rob replied, and he turned a full stream of light upon the new-comer, who was indeed Jillett, with his mask off in his hand for the occasion.

"Well are you satisfied?" he asked, coming forward with a laugh.

"Quite so. What news do you bring?"

"Good news. You must come with me and hide. It is just dawning day, and the men will soon be released from their cells to work in the mine. You must hide for the day; to-night we will work."

"Are the miners imprisoned?"

"At night, yes, or a few of them would make their escape. In the daytime I keep a close watch upon them."

"How about Diablo?"

"He is in the Temple of Bacchus, gambling with the Forty."

"Humph! to-morrow night at this time, he won't be there."

"Why not?"

"Because the Temple of Bacchus will be in flames, or, better still, in ashes."

"Maybe it will be all right, but the driving of the outlaws into the cave here will bother us more. But come along, and I will secrete you where you will not be molested."

Taking the lead, Jillett strode rapidly away up the passage, and closing the lantern-slide, Rosebud Rob followed in his steps. The passage was a trifle ascending, and in the course of twenty minutes they emerged into the secret mine—the same grand masterpiece of Nature which Photograph

Phil had entered previously, in company with the chief, Diablo.

The Sport was surprised at the strange tableau, and gazed around him as he passed across the sandy bottom of the basin with a great deal of interest.

Passing across the basin to the rocky walls on the north, Jillett unlocked an iron door which led into a dungeon.

Pushing the Sport in first he entered after him, closing the door in his wake. They were now in total darkness, but the Sport relieved that by turning on the light from his lantern.

The dungeon was but a hole in the rocks with a door to it, being a shapeless affair, and inhabited by picks, shovels, and mining implements of every description.

A large cast-ron box, shaped like a trunk, stood in one corner, and to this Jillett directed the Sport's attention.

"That is the treasure-box, and its contents include all of the cash and bullion taken from the bank, besides a large amount of gold taken from the mine."

"All right, I'll keep a good watch over it. By the way, is there anything to eat in this den?"

"Yes; I have provided you with meats and corn bread, in a basket yonder. Now, good-day; keep quiet, and when it is time, I will release you."

And so saying, he took his departure, leaving the Sport alone in the cave—alone with the treasure.

The first thing he did was to tackle the edibles which Jillett had thoughtfully provided for his use. He was exceedingly hungry, and consequently made a good hearty meal.

During the forenoon he heard the men working in the basin mine—heard the echoing reverberations of their picks and shovels, but the sound of no voice, except that of Jack Jillett, as he paced to and fro on guard.

The day passed slowly to the, as it were, imprisoned Sport. It was gloomy in the cheerless cave, even with his lantern lit, and he longed for night to come, and with it action.

Night at last began to fall, as he ascertained by peering through the keyhole out into the basin, and by the cessation of the ringing of picks and shovels.

Then came a long blank, during which, for several hours, he could hear no sound of human presence in the basin.

Then came ringing footsteps, the door was hastily thrown open, and there stepped suddenly into the presence of the Sport—*Diablo, the Terrible!*

CHAPTER XII

PHIL'S EXPERIMENT

THERE could be no mistake about it being the robber chief. Rosebud Rob had often heard him described, and the tall, waving plume in his hat bespoke that he was chief, or at least an officer of rank in the outlaw band.

As he stepped within the cell Rosebud had involuntarily stepped to one side of the entrance, so that he was not immediately seen—not until he made an agile leap upon the intruder and bore him to the ground.

Then there was an instantaneous grappling of the two men and a fierce struggle for the mastery—a struggle between two powerful, determined men who were desperately resolved to win or die in the attempt—who knew that one of their lives must necessarily pay the forfeit.

Over and over they rolled, endeavouring to dash each other against the rocky projections in order to produce insensibility. But their efforts seemed unavailing, and thus the struggle continued.

Finally the mask of Diablo became loosened and torn off, and the stream of light from the Sport's lantern fell full upon the undisguised chieftain's face.

Rosebud Rob uttered a cry of consternation and surprise at sight of it.

What could this mean? Could the dead return to life?

For the face was that of Joaquin Muriete—Joaquin, whom the Sport had supposed was dead.

At last Rosebud Rob heard the sound of approaching footsteps, and his courage was heightened, for he recognized the step as that of Jack Jillett. A moment later the renegade outlaw came bounding into the dungeon, and he uttered a cry of surprise as he beheld the two men writhing upon the floor.

"Great Heaven! Joaquin?" he gasped, standing aghast.

"Yes, Joaquin," the Sport replied. "Help me to secure him."

Jillett obeyed in silence. He first secured Joaquin Jr.'s feet, and then his arms and wrists were broken from their clasp, and bound.

Then Rosebud Rob arose to his feet, not a little sore and stiff as a result of his long struggle. Diablo lay upon the rocky floor of the cell, cursing like a trooper.

"Gag him, or do something to stifle his yells," Rosebud Rob directed, and Jillett tied a handkerchief over the captured outlaw's mouth, which had the desired effect.

"How have you got matters arranged elsewhere?" Rosebud Rob asked. "Are we in danger of being surprised?"

"No! Every man of the Infernal Forty is drugged to stupefaction and securely bound."

"Where are they?"

"In the mine here, whither I dragged them one by one."

"How came Diablo—or Joaquin—here?"

"I know not. He was not in the Temple, and I came hither in search of him. Lucky it was I came in time, or you'd have been stiff by this time."

"True enough, and I have you to thank for my life," Rosebud Rob said, earnestly. "Now, the question is, how shall we get our treasure and our prisoners into Cascade City?"

"Easily enough, only we shall have to make two trips. There is a passage leading out of the mine to the entrance I spoke of near where Joaquin's toll-gate once stood. In the passage are five mules on whom we can load several of the prisoners, and the treasure-box. What do you say to setting the miners free, as they were compulsory servants of Diablo?"

"I leave that to your judgment," Rosebud Rob replied. "But, come! let's hurry up with this job, for other work demands my attention."

"Very well, remain here and guard the chief, and I will go for the mules," Jillett said, after which he departed.

He was gone about ten minutes, when he returned, leading five pack-mules.

The Sport had, in the meantime, dragged Diablo out of the cell, and left him in the vicinity of his captured confederates, while he went back after the treasure-chest and succeeded in dragging that out, as Jillett arrived.

The work of loading now began.

The iron chest being heavy was assigned as the burden of one mule.

Some twenty of the prisoners, including Diablo, were then tied in a line or lashed to the remaining mules.

"You had best set out for Cascade City alone," said Jillett, "while I remain here to guard the other prisoners. All you have to do is to follow the mules, and they will lead you into the passage, which you follow to the end, in the face of a wall of rock. Search about the floor at the foot of this wall, and you will find an iron foot-spring that, when you step upon it, will cause the walls to part for the space of a couple of minutes, when they will glide together again. A spring on the outside will serve to open them for you on your return."

"You will remain here?"

"Yes, as there is one who might come and release the rest of these fellows, should I leave them alone."

"To whom do you allude?"

"To one Millicent Vere, who is the affianced bride of this Diablo."

"Ah! I have heard of her. Well, you remain here, and I will soon return with a posse of Vigilantes at my back."

And with these words Rosebud Rob set out in the rear of his mule train, which was connected together by lariats.

By following them and Jillett's directions, he was soon out upon the toll-road, and proceeding toward Cascade City.

The night was not moonless, nor was it particularly light. Upon glancing at his watch, as he descended the bluffs into the gulch, the Sport found that it was two o'clock, A.M.

The town had mostly quieted down, very few persons being abroad.

The first persons Rosebud met were Schuyler, the president of the late bank, and Bill Greeland, the losing miner.

Both stopped short, as they met the Sport with his cargo of gold and human freight.

"Oh!" exclaimed Rob, "it's I, with the fruits of capture. I have all of Diablo's treasure, and some of his men, and also himself. What shall we do with them, for I am in a hurry and wish to return for the rest of the robbers, whom I left bound and in charge of one Jillett, who assisted me in the capture?"

"Then leave this caravan in our charge, with the assurance that we will care for it promptly," said Greeland. "The bank will make a first-class prison, for the present."

Rosebud Rob readily assented, and leaving matters in their hands, he hurried off through the gulch in search of those citizens who had formed themselves into a vigilance committee. Soon collecting a half-dozen men, he set out once more for the secret cavern.

Entering the secret passage from the toll-road, they traversed it until they debouched into the basin-mine.

Here a great surprise awaited them—especially the Sport.

The prisoners whom he had left in charge of Jillett were gone, while the renegade outlaw lay in their place, with several bullet-holes in his forehead—dead!

"By Heaven! they are gone!" Rosebud Rob said. "Was the Temple of Bacchus burned to-night, Lelon?"

"Yes: the flames had but died out when you arrived in the gulch, Sport."

"Then these outlaws, aided by a woman,

have made their escape. Let us look to the cabins."

An examination was made, which resulted in the discovery that not only had the outlaws escaped, but the imprisoned miners had been liberated and were gone.

A thorough search of the strange cavern resulted no better. The outlaws were all gone, or so securely hidden that they could not be found.

"There is no use of our looking further," Rosebud Rob said, at last. "The woman, Millicent Vere, has beaten my game when I held a sure hand."

"And the sooner we get out of here, the better!" cried one of the Vigilantes.

"Looke hayr, will ye?" and directing the light upon the ground, he enabled them each to behold a copious trail of giant powder, running from one centre in a score of directions.

Every face suddenly was possessed of a white, scared look, except that of the Sport. Outwardly he was as cool as the proverbial cucumber.

"True enough," he said, grimly—"a plot is on foot to blow us up, and it only remains for us to make a run of it."

And they did make a run of it.

Taking to the passage through which they had entered, they started off at the top of their speed, and succeeded in getting out upon the highway, near where Joaquin's cottage had stood.

And not a moment too soon!

There was suddenly a tremendous jarring of the ground beneath their feet, as if an earthquake had come upon them—then, a roar as of a hundred wide-mouthed cannons.

The blow-up of the mine had no visible effect upon the country above it. The cavernous basin was so deep, that only the jar was felt in the outer world.

"We have had a narrow escape, pilgrims, and I think we have reason to be thankful," Rosebud Rob said, with a shudder. "I pity any one that was alive within that secret mine when she blew up."

Photograph Phil, after leaving the cabin of the Masons, returned to his "schooner" wagon in the gulch, where he usually slept.

Crawling into his vehicle upon a couch of skins, he dropped off into a light nap, from which he awoke in about an hour. But in that hour he dreamt that danger was menacing Jennie Grey.

Peering out of the wagon, he saw that the gulch was nearly deserted. Mason's cabin was dark and wrapped in slumber to all appearance.

"I must now to my work," the young artist muttered. "The building must be burned according to the Sport's direction." Arming himself with a can of kerosene oil, which he carried among his effects, he left the wagon and dodged about in the shadows of the gulch shanties until he came to the robbers' nest known as the Temple of Bacchus.

Reconnoitring, to find that there was no one in the immediate vicinity, he proceeded to saturate the walls with the inflammable oil.

As soon as he had accomplished this, he set fire to some old grass that would communicate with the building, and then skulked away to his wagon.

In ten minutes the "Temple" was wrapped in flames, and the cry of fire which sounded through the gulch had the effect of bringing out a large crowd. But as soon as the place had burned to the ground, they all crawled back to rest, and the gulch was deserted.

About an hour before daybreak Phil was lying in a semi-drowse, when somebody parted the curtains of his wagon, and an excited voice called to him:

"Mr. Phil, come up to the cabin, for Heaven's sake! Something awful has happened."

He recognized the voice as that of his betrothed, Jennie Grey, and he was out by her side in an instant.

"What is it, Jennie? Tell me."

"Oh! Phil, it is awful! We have just found Mr. Mason lying in his cellar, his head split open with an axe, and his money has been stolen."

Photograph Phil uttered an exclamation of horror.

"Wait a moment," he said, "and I will accompany you back to the cabin."

He crept back into the wagon, armed himself, and then went with sweet Jennie to the miner's cabin.

Although it was approaching daylight, and the town was yet asleep, many had heard of the shocking murder, and had flocked to the cabin.

The body of the murdered miner had already been brought from the cellar, and laid upon a lounge.

By daylight the news of the crime had spread throughout the town, and though crowds came none were admitted, except a few friends.

As soon as practicable, Rosebud Rob sought out Photograph Phil, and found him talking to Jennie in the parlour.

"What do you think about it?" Rosebud Rob asked. "Do you suppose the murderer has fled the town?"

"No, I do not; and John Mason being

dead, I dare say he will come here to-day!"

"Ha! then you think you know the guilty man?"

"That I cannot even tell you, Mapleton," the Boy Sleuth said—"not at present, anyhow. Wait, and if the right man comes, I will endeavour to prove my suspicions of him."

Many of the townspeople, however, lingered about the cabin, and a spirit of revenge was rife among them.

Mason had ever been a first and foremost citizen, and dark were the threats of the people against the murderer.

About noon Reverend Lucas Alyne presented himself at the cabin, in his disguise as Jeff Harkins.

The moment Photograph Phil saw him, he nodded to the Sport.

"That's the man, ten to one," he whispered. "Do you know him?"

Rosebud Rob shook his head.

"No! Who is he?"

"His name is Lucas Alyne."

"What! that man Lucas Alyne?"

"Sh! Yes, it is he, in disguise. Keep still, and leave all to me. First, let us see what he has to say."

The disguised minister paid not the slightest attention to either Phil or our Sport, but went to Miss Priscilla and offered her comfort in a few well-chosen words, after which he proceeded into the parlour and viewed the body. When he came out he was a shade whiter, and evidently somewhat agitated.

There were quite a number of people in the cabin, and glancing around, he said:

"My friends, this is a sad affliction which has visited us in the death of Mr. Mason, whom I knew to be a good man, although we were not friends exactly. You may, some of you, remember me as the Reverend Lucas Alyne, for this beard I wear is merely false. I had to adopt the disguise in order to be near my ward here, who was cruelly taken from me and placed in Mr. Mason's charge. Now that the poor man is dead, I am sure that none of you present can object to returning her to my loving care."

And as he finished speaking the reverend rascal removed his false hair and beard, and stood forth in his true colours.

"Ay! I object!" Photograph Phil cried, springing to his feet—"I object, and give two reasons: one of them is, that Miss Grey here"—and as he spoke he drew Jennie to his side—"is my affianced wife. Another—her father and own natural guardian has just turned up, and will assume her protection."

A cry of surprise came from all—a joyous

exclamation from Jennie—a baffled oath from Lucas Alyne.

"It is a lie!—a base plot to rob me of my ward!" he cried fiercely. "Do not believe them, my friends. They are conspiring against me—against justice and the Lord. I appeal to you—I appeal to you!"

"Do not use the name of the Lord in this case, Lucas Alyne," Photograph Phil said sternly. "For you to pretend piety any longer, is out of all reason. If you so desire, I can produce William Grey, the father of the young lady here."

"'Tis false! I defy you to produce him, you young Philistine! William Grey is long since dead!"

"You err!" said Bill Greeland, the miner, as he too stepped forward, and pulled a mass of bushy false beard from his face. "Look you, Lucas Alyne—I am the man!"

The defeated guardian staggered back.

"You—you!" he gasped, his eyes glaring wildly.

"Yes, I," said the handsome elderly miner. "After all your devilish scheming for wealth, Lucas Alyne, I have survived to wrest one of my children from you!" and as Jennie flew to his embrace the returned wanderer clasped her fondly to him.

Lucas Alyne, purple with passion, turned toward the door. But the Sport and the young Sleuth instantly blocked his path.

"You will pardon us," Photograph Phil said, slipping a pair of handcuffs upon the wrists of the confounded man quickly with Rosebud's help, "but we beg to detain you upon the suspicion that you are the murderer of John Mason. Perhaps we are wrong, but I choose to try an experiment which will either vindicate or convict you. Ladies and gentlemen, if you will be patient, I will return soon."

And so saying, he left the shanty.

Excusing himself, William Grey took Jennie to a hotel, where more fully they could understand the happiness of their glad reunion.

Photograph Phil soon returned to the miner's shanty, bearing a tiny camera or photographing instrument. This he took into the parlour, where lay the dead body of John Mason.

The others followed him, curious and excited, and Rosebud Rob also marched the prisoner into the room.

Alyne was now ghastly white, and trembling in every limb.

Photograph Phil went calmly at his work. He placed his camera upon a pedestal, at the foot of the improvised bier, after which he propped up the body in a sitting posture. He next opened the eyelids of the dead

man, so that the glassy balls were revealed, and then turned to the wondering and excited spectators.

"What I now propose to do," he said, "is to photograph the pupil of the dead man's eye. You all probably know that the last object a dying man's eyes rest upon, before life becomes extinct, is indelibly photographed on the pupil of his eye. By taking a photograph of the pupil after death, you can reproduce that object as naturally as though taken from life. It is an art I once learned in the East, and have used several times in convicting murderers. I will now proceed with my work!"

Lucas Alyne at this juncture gasped for breath, and fell on the floor, where he lay, panting, his eyes glaring with insane desperation.

Phil went calmly at his work, and in the course of ten minutes he produced a tintype from his machine, and retired with some chemicals to a dark room to finish it. Not long was it before he returned and gravely passed it around for inspection.

Many were the exclamations as those in the room gazed upon the faint but distinct picture, for *it was the face of Jeff Harkins, alias Reverend Lucas Alyne.*

The murderer of John Mason was lynched that night at sundown, in the presence of a large concourse of people, and at the same time Diablo, otherwise Joaquin, Jr., and those of the Infernal Forty who had been captured, were launched into eternity.

That night Rosebud Rob and Photograph Phil paid a visit to William Grey and his daughter, and were gladly received, though of course Phil was the recipient of the lion's share of pretty Jennie's attention.

While they were passing away the evening a note came for Rosebud Rob in the handwriting of Baltimore Bess.

The note read :

"MR. MAPLETON,—Will you come to me? I am dying, and want to see you once more before I cross the river to eternity. I am at Mrs. Lyoniel's.—Your loving BESS, alias PAULINE GREY."

"My God! Can it be true?" the Sport cried, bursting into tears. "I will not believe it until I see for myself."

Seizing his hat, he rushed from the room, leaving the note behind him. Mr. Grey picked it up, and as he saw it he groaned aloud.

"My Heaven, Jennie!" he gasped. "It

is from your sister—from long-lost Pauline! Dying! dying! Oh! God forbid! Philip—quick, boy! Guide us to the place where we shall find our darling."

Rosebud Rob was the first to reach Mrs. Lyoniel's, and he rushed upstairs to the room he had formerly occupied. Opening the door, he softly entered. Mrs. Lyoniel was crouching by the bedside, and a physician stood near by, looking very grave.

Bess was lying upon the bed, deathly white, but still possessed of consciousness, for a glad smile came to her face as the Sport came forward.

"Oh! I am so glad!" she said, in a low, sweet voice—"so glad you have come to see me, Rosebud. I was afraid you would get here too late, or would not come at all."

"Bess, my darling, do you think that I could have stayed away?"

Then turning to the physician, he asked:

"Doctor, are you sure there is no hope—no hope at all?"

"Positive!" was the low reply. "She has not bled externally, you see."

"No! there is no hope," Bess replied, seeming to have caught their words. "I am dying. Ah—dark—now! Oh, look! the sun has burst from the clouds, and—and—kiss me good-bye, Robbie—"

He kissed for the last time in her earthly career the lips that were growing cold, and softly her life went out, leaving a sweet half-smile and expression of peaceful joy upon her features.

Baltimore Bess was dead!

Dead!—just a moment before the door opened and William Grey and Jennie, accompanied by Photograph Phil, entered the room—too late!

In due course William Grey left the mines for his Virginia home, accompanied by Jennie and Photograph Phil. For his services in recovering the stolen treasure, large compensations were offered Rosebud Rob, but he declined them all, stating that he had enough of this world's wealth to carry him through, or, at least, to satisfy his wants.

It is not improbable that the Virginia papers may ere long herald the nuptials of Jennie and Phil, for, though their love-making was sudden and youthful, their hearts are still bound together in the strong bond of true affection.

The outlaws who escaped from Diablo's stronghold, aided, as was supposed, by Millicent Vere, have never been heard of since, much to the relief of the few souls who still toil for gold in Cascade City.

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